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THE SOUND OF HER OWN VOICE: LAURENCE, DEMETER AND THE DISCOVERY OF DISCOURSE

BY

ANNE VIMTRUP ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL 1994

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE SOUND OF HER OWN VOICE: LAURENCE, DEMETER AND THE DISCOVERY OF DISCOURSE submitted by ANNE VIMTRUP in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

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October 22, 1994

Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to explore, using the ancient Myth of Demeter as a paradigm, the nature of female discourse as it arises out of the Manawaka fiction of Margaret Laurence. It is hoped that by employing the Demeter myth it will be possible to construct a paradigm of discourse that is not only specific to Laurence's Manawaka heroines but to Canadian prairie heroines as a whole. It is also hoped that by linking the Demeter myth with the genre of prairie fiction it will be possible to help open up for definition female discourse as a totality, thereby determining not only its origin but the possibilities for its future development.

This analysis demonstrates that the discovery of discourse is made up of three components: exile/loss; the search for autonomy; and reconciliation. The journeys of the Manawaka women--Hagar Shipley (The Stone Angel), Rachel Cameron (A Jest of God), Stacey MacAindra (The Fire-Dwellers) and Morag Gunn (The Diviners)--to discover their own distinctive voices maneuver through these three components. The culmination of these journeys not only re-affirms the connections that exist between ancient mythology and modern women's writing, but also articulates from a feminine perspective the uniqueness of prairie literature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....1

Introduction: Here Be Goddesses 3

Part I: Laurence 3

Part II: Demeter 6

Part III: Discourse 16

Chapter One: Hagar *"Her Father's Voice"* 23

Chapter Two: Rachel *"The Mute Child"* 40

Chapter Three: Stacey *"Mother Tongue"* 56

Chapter Four: Morag *"The Myth-Maker"* 71

Conclusions *"Her Own Voice"* 86

Bibliography.....96

Appendix *"The Homeric Hymn to Demeter"*.....102

Preface

There is evidence that the final act at Eleusis was the setting up of two vessels which were tipped over, so that the water flowed towards the east and the west, the directions of birth and death. Thus the ritual began and ended with water, symbol of the unconscious beginnings of all life and of the wise spirit of the conscious end--the living water "springing up into eternal life." (Helen M. Luke, Woman: Earth and Spirit 68)

The waters flowed from north to south, and the current was visible, but now a south wind was blowing, ruffling the water in the opposite direction, so that the river, as so often here, seemed to be flowing both ways.

Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence. (Margaret Laurence, The Diviners 452-3)

In the last scene of The Diviners, Morag Gunn, woman and writer, contemplates the hidden life of the river outside her cabin. In doing so, she makes us acutely aware of not only the complexity and mystery of life, but the interconnectedness of all things. So it is that the fiction of Margaret Laurence, a Canadian writer noted for her ability to articulate the complex nuances of human existence in terms immediately recognizable to her readers, is intimately connected to the ancient myth of the goddess Demeter, far removed by place and time from the prairie town of Manawaka.

The link between the myth of Demeter and the stories of Laurence is based on the mutuality of female experience, the quest for spiritual, emotional and physical fulfillment that is part of the search for validation, both personal and social. The stories of the goddess of fertility and the women of Manawaka help to illuminate the hidden or unknown aspects of womanhood; yet they do not derive their power from

exclusivity, speaking in a language of the select, but from their puissant messages of reconciliation and unity. C. Kerényi tells us that:

> To enter into the figure of Demeter means to be pursued, to be robbed, raped, to fail to understand, to rage and grieve, but then to get everything back and be born again. And what does all this mean, save to realize the universal principle of life, the fate of everything mortal? (Essays on a Science of Mythology 123)

Like a clear moulage, the story of Demeter superimposes onto the cycle of the Manawaka novels--The Stone Angel (1964), A Jest of God (1966), The Fire-Dwellers (1969), and The Diviners (1974)--with considerable ease; both ancient myth and modern fiction have grown out of the same creative medium. The intent here is to explore how, via the myth of Demeter and her revisioning of it, Laurence succeeds in giving voice to a discourse that is distinctive to the heroine of the Canadian prairies.

Introduction: Here Be Goddesses

Part I: Laurence

"'Be loyal to the story,' the old hag would say to me. 'Be eternally and unswervingly loyal to the story.'"
(Isak Dinesen, "The Blank Page" The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English 1419)

One of the elements of Laurence's writing that makes it distinctive in Canadian literature is her ability to express the various nuances of the Canadian pysche. While many of her themes--survival, exile, love and self-identity among them--are by no means new or radical in Canadian/prairie fiction, they are articulated with a quality of voice that is undeniably Canadian. Laurence captures nuances of place, time and social structure with a finesse that renders her characters immediately familiar to her readers, without allowing them to become stereotypical.

This can be illustrated by comparing two distinctive Manawaka characters. Hagar Shipley in The Stone Angel (1964) and Christie Logan in The Diviners (1974) could hardly be termed stock or stereotypical characters; nonetheless, their voices reflect unerringly the nature of their place in the Canadian landscape. Hagar's pragamatic, socially correct speech belies her legacy of Scots Presbyterian puritanism and intolerance combined with ambition. Christie the garbageman, Hagar's social antithesis, displays a verbal dichotomy: on the one hand he is the town's fool, gleefully playing up idiotically to Manawaka's power brokers; and yet he instills in young Morag a sense of ancestral pride by

wildly spinning for her tales of the exiled Scottish Highlanders and their immigration to a hostile wilderness.

W.J. Keith praises Laurence's "control of voice that expresses a peculiarly Canadian sensibility" (Canadian Literature in English 159). At the same time her writing possesses a universality that lifts it above considerations of historical, sexual and national orientations. There is about her work a quality of truthfulness and reality which is heightened by her skillful interweaving of fictional narrative with an overseeing omniscience that is the result of experience, Laurence's own experience. It is clear that, for Laurence, the creation of fictional worlds is very much dependent on the world of reality. The town of Manawaka typifies this interdependence, being based on Neepawa, Manitoba, Laurence's home town.

This interweaving goes beyond such tangible things, however; Laurence's own significance as a *female* writer is a result of articulating the female experience truthfully through her fictional heroines. This is mostly true of her Manawaka works, because, as she reveals in her memoir Dance on the Earth (1989), it took her a long time to uncover her own artistic identity: "How long, how regrettably long, it took me to find my true voice as a woman writer" (5). Part of the problem for Laurence and writers of her generation was a lack of role models who were willing to depict sexuality and motherhood from a female perspective. For Laurence, the means to finding her own voice came by way of a condescending

reviewer's pen:

> "Ho hum," the male reviewer said...."Why must we always have the obligatory birth scene in novels written by women?" Unwittingly, that dolt helped me begin a kind of self-liberation in the area of writing. I was furious. It was fine for male writers to portray unending scenes of violence, blood, and gore in the service of destruction and death. It was swell for some male writers to drone on interminably about the boring masturbation of their protagonists, or how they screwed a multiplicity of faceless wommen. But it was not all right, apparently, for a woman writer to speak of the miraculous beginnings of human life. Obviously, something was pretty crazy here. (Dance 6)

Happily for women writers today, it has become 'all right' to speak openly and honestly about the female experience. This revolution is certainly due in large part to writers such as Laurence who made a commitment to articulate the areas of human existence that for centuries have been either suppressed altogether or confined to 'women's spheres' of involvement. This acknowledgement of the female experience is important, not only because of the liberation it accords women writers, but because, as Margaret Atwood explains, it allows women "to claim their full humanity, which means acknowledging the shadows as well as the lights" (Language in Her Eye: Views by Canadian Women Writing in English 24). Laurence does not avoid the 'shadows' of the female experience in her writing, and thus her fiction is not only highly credible and significant to women writers and readers, but to all the readers of her work.

Part II: Demeter

Demeter has an irresistible appeal to many scholars, in particular to feminists. This is due in large part to her powerful position as not only one of the Olympians, but as the symbol of fertility, both human and earthly. She is a highly symbolic and multi-faceted figure; in her incarnation as the Triple Goddess--Demeter/Kore/Hecate--she represents death and rebirth, immortality, fecundity, power, virginity and wisdom. All these elements figure significantly in the story of Persephone's abduction and Demeter's search for her, which serves not only as an allegorical explanation for the cycle of the seasons, but establishes the origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries. It is in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (authorship unknown) that Demeter and Persephone's story is first told, and it is held to be the official version (for complete *Hymn*, see Appendix). References will made to the *Hymn* in relation to the Manawaka novels, but by way of introduction the following version is presented; chosen for its brevity, it is taken from Barbara Smith's chapter "Greece," in The Feminist Companion to Mythology (1992):

> One day, Kore-Persephone was playing in the meadows with the young daughters...of Okeanos. She was so engrossed with picking flowers that she did not notice she had strayed from the others, and alone she came upon Gaia's [Earth] unusual flower. Fascinated, Persephone reached out with both hands and grasped the stem. Suddenly the ground beneath her opened up and from the chasm there emerged the awesome figure of Hades, driving a magnificent golden chariot drawn by two fiery black horses. He swept the screaming girl up onto his chariot and bore her away to his kingdom.
>
> Demeter heard Persephone's screams and rushed

> to where she'd been playing, but the chasm had already been covered over again. For nine days and nights, Demeter roamed all of Greece seeking her daughter or news of her whereabouts. Eventually, Hekate [goddess of wisdom/witchcraft, associated with the moon] told her that she had heard Persephone's scream, and the sun god, Helios, said that he had witnessed the abduction. In all, Demeter wandered for a whole year, during which time she neglected her duties as Earth Mother: the land grew barren, animals and human beings alike lost interest in reproduction, and slowly the earth was dying. In addition, mortals forewent their sacrificial duties to the gods.
>
> At length, Zeus sent Iris, goddess of the rainbow, to the cave where Demeter was hiding to persuade her to reappear. Demeter, however, was unmoved. Then Zeus sent the Messenger Hermes down to the underworld to negotiate with Hades for Persephone's release. Reluctantly Hades agreed, but before Persephone left his domain, as a trick...he persuaded her to eat several pomegranate pips. Persephone and Demeter were eventually reunited, but since Persephone had eaten the food of the dead, she was obliged to return to the underworld for one third of the year. (Feminist 69)

It is important to note that this version excludes the events surrounding Demeter's encounter with the family of Celeus, ruler of Eleusis, that results in the building of Demeter's temple at Eleusis and the establishment of the rites of her worship. However, Smith's feminist interpretation, one of many such interpretations, elucidates those elements that are felt to be most pertinent to the analysis here.

Much has been written about the true significance of Demeter and and her connection with the Great Goddess of ancient times; not surprisingly there are a variety of approaches to her. In Ancient Greece one function of the myth of Demeter was to explain the cyclical pattern of death and rebirth depicted in Nature, as part of an attempt to

reconcile the opposites of life and death. In Jungian pyschoanalysis, the Great Goddess is intertwined with the archetype of the Great Mother. Demeter's appeal, especially as a descendant of the Great Goddess is obvious to feminist scholars such as Carol Christ ("Why Women Need the Goddess" 1978), Monica Sjöö (The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth 1987), and Merlin Stone (Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood: A Treasury of Goddess and Heroine Lore from Around the World 1979), who are intent on reclaiming for modern women the power of the Great Goddess and the reverence accorded her. Carol Christ states that the "simplest and most basic meaning of the symbol of Goddess is the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of female power as a beneficent and independent power" (A Reader in Feminist Knowledge 293).The figure of Demeter/Great Goddess has even given rise to ersatz pyschological self-help books for women, telling them, in user-friendly terms, how to 'connect with their inner goddess.'

Although the purpose of the analysis here is to focus on the points of connection between the myth of Demeter and the experiences of Laurence's women, it is worth examining briefly the agrarian connection between Demeter and prairie fiction. Demeter's function as Corn Goddess and as an incarnation of "The Lady of the Plants," one of the many terms given to the Great Goddess, is an obvious and important connection with prairie fiction and its growth out of the dependent relationship humankind has with the earth. It is

significant that, of the many symbols associated with Demeter, wheat is arguably the most powerful one and functions as a potent point of connection between the myth and prairie writing. In prairie fiction wheat is a double-edged symbol, signifying both the beneficent bounty of the land and the unappeasable demands it places upon those who seek to partake of that bounty. This duality is evoked in the work of writers such as Frederick Philip Grove and Martha Ostenso, portraying the land and, by default, Nature, as an insatiable giant *she*, or, as Margaret Atwood defines her in Survival (1972), "a nasty chilly old woman" (202). The fascination of the land for prairie writers seems rooted in a need to somehow reconcile the dual nature of the land, as both giver and taker, into a cohesive whole. While the results of this endeavour are remarkably varied, it has resulted in a vigorous, dynamic and lyrical genre in which the prairie-as-Nature reigns as a principal player, sifting like prairie dust into the consciousness of the prairie-dweller.

Little is known about the actual proceedings of the Eleusinian Mysteries, an annual celebration of Demeter as the Goddess of fertility that were performed at Eleusis for nearly two thousand years, up to as late as 500 A.D. when Demeter's sanctuary was destroyed by the Early Christians. It is generally agreed, however, that at the climax of the sacred proceedings, an ear of corn or of wheat was held up for all to see, in reverential silence. Jennifer Woolger and Richard Woolger believe that "for the initiates this must

therefore have been the ultimate symbol of what they were seeking, in some way it was the symbolic reassurance of that which would endure beyond the death of the fruit" (The Goddess Within 316-7). This reverence for the natural force that provides the means of existence for humankind--namely, grain--resonates throughout prairie literature. As Laurence Ricou notes in the Preface to Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction (1973), fiction itself is not confined to considerations of place; yet in prairie fiction, the "landscape, and man's relation to it, is the concrete situation with which the prairie artist initiates his re-creation of the human experience" (xi). Laurence, a prairie writer, is actively involved in this re-creation. For her, however, the internal landscape is ultimately more important than the external. In his Introduction to Writers of the Prairies (1973), Donald Stephens notes that Laurence "moves beyond the concern for nature into the considerations of the lasting effects of environment on people"(4), and thus the prairie becomes a sensual and compelling backdrop to the experiences of her characters. Although it will not be examined beyond this brief analysis, it is important to recognize this connection between Laurence's writing as representative of prairie fiction and the myth of Demeter. The agrarian language that characterizes both the Demeter myth and prairie fiction translates in the Manawaka stories into natural imagery and forms a vital part of the female prairie discourse that will

be illuminated.

What is most striking about the myth for our purpose here is Demeter's refusal to acquiesce meekly when she learns the true circumstances of Persephone's abduction from Helios, who advises her to "not thus bear an unrelenting anger to no avail," but rather be thankful that her daughter is married to a worthy husband (Appendix 104). His advice does nothing to assuage her grief, but merely inflames her anger. She has been violated twice over: her daughter has been taken from her, and she has been betrayed and undermined. Her refusal to heed Helios' advice depicts her as possessing free will, guided by motivations beyond her identity as a fertility goddess.

In the poetic vision of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Demeter exhibits a strangely human vulnerability: "But a more dread and terrible grief possessed Demeter's heart, and thereafter she was angry with the son of Cronus" (Appendix 104). By giving herself up completely to her grief, the myth tells us, she neglects her duties to the earth and to Olympus. This proves to be the most radical, evocative and powerful act she could perform, because, as the earth dies and mortals neglect their sacrificial duties to the gods, Demeter's authority as an incarnate of the Great Goddess becomes clear. Even Zeus, the Father of the Gods, is unable to withstand her anger and is finally forced to capitulate to her demand that Persephone be returned to her.

Some critics deplore, with some justification, the

practice of using mythology--perceived by scholars such as Merlin Stone and Carol Christ to be, to a large extent, the product of phallocentric, patriarchal cultures--as a means of interpreting the writings of twentieth century women writers. There is an inherent danger that undue reliance will be placed on such a technique in order to *validate* women's writing, in the masculinist terms particular to many ancient myths, instead of developing new standards and means by which to judge such work. In her article "Women's Rewriting of Myths," Diane Purkiss argues, referring to Robert Graves's analysis in The White Goddess of the importance of the Great Goddess as poetic muse, that a "discourse of mythography which valorizes the truth of a central female figure as a bearer of power and meaning functions to block women from any kind of cultural engagement other than ancillary ones" (The Feminist Companion to Mythology 443). It is her contention that the body of writing--literary criticism, pyschoanalytic and anthropological--focussing on the mythology of the Great Goddess, by writers such as Graves, Erich Neumann and others, is written with a particularly masculine agenda intent primarily on addressing male pyschological concerns. A false imposition of goddess myths on modern fiction is seen as simply valourizing a male-centered ethos, bringing about a futile juggling act on the part of feminist critics to re-interpret those myths for propaganda purposes.

While there is some validity to Purkiss' argument, there is still much that can be culled from employing the goddess

myths as a means of enhancing our understanding of women's writing. In her article "The Language of Sisterhood" (1980), Angela Carter notes that female writers and critics "tend toward a study of myth because of the paucity of historical references to that statistically rather more than half the human race to which we belong"(The State of the Language 226). The legitimacy of analyzing modern writing via mythology can be attested to by the wealth of such critical writing that already exists, such as Helen Buss's insightful work Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence, which uses the Demeter/Persephone and Pysche myths as a means of analyzing Laurence's treatment of mother and daughter relationships. Stating in the introduction that her approach will be based on the Jungian archetype of the Mother, Buss explains that she wants to "examine Laurence's exploration of the phenomenon of women reacting to and reaching for a concept of the feminine which is at odds with that which their society and their biological heritage provides" (Buss 10). As Buss's statement implies, to reach for a feminine ideal involves resistance to the status quo, and both Demeter and the Manawaka heroines enact this resistance. Demeter does so after Persephone's abduction when she refuses to fulfill her role as the provider of earthly fertility and declines to fill her place on Mount Olympus with the other gods. The Manawaka women, in various ways and with varying degrees of success, resist passive acceptance of their ascribed roles in their societies. If

nothing else, the ancient myths confirm what women have always known, that to be female is never simple.

In Buss' work, the focus is, as its title suggests, on the dynamics of the mother-daughter relationships in Manawaka. Because of Buss' thorough analysis of this subject, the analysis here is deliberately focussing primarily on the Manawaka heroines and their connection with Demeter. With the exception of Rachel in Chapter Two, the mother-daughter relationships are treated as incidental to the thesis.

In his article, "Creativity" (1990), Joseph Campbell states that the "personal creative act is related to the realm of myth, the realm of the muses, because myth is the homeland of the inspiration of the arts" (C.G. Jung and the Humanities 139). The myth of Demeter will be used as a means of uncovering the hidden terrain in the Manawaka novels, a terrain wherein the uniqueness of the female experience couched within the Canadian landscape is articulated. While it is true that Demeter comes to us by way of patriarchal poetic vision--namely, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*--her lineage is ancient, preceding Classical Greece. The Eleusinian Mysteries celebrating Demeter as the Corn Goddess were the result of prior centuries of worship of the Great Goddess, who was incarnated as Demeter when the male god of the invading Aryans usurped her power. Although Demeter is subordinate to Zeus, Father of the Gods, in the Olympian hierarchy, the defiance she exhibits after losing Persephone indicates that the Great

Goddess has not lost her power altogether. In essence her story demonstrates the possibilities for reconciliation with one's environment and, thus, the possibilities for moving beyond its strictures. For women writers, artists, and readers, the myth of the Great Goddess--and thus, the myth of Demeter--symbolizes a powerful autonomy. In particular, female novelists, including pre-twentieth century writers, have recognized the possibilities that the myth of the Great Goddess/Demeter suggests for revising the female experience. Annis Pratt states in Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (1981) that these writers have "dug the goddess out of the ruins and cleansed the debris from her face, casting aside the gynophobic masks that have obscured her beauty, her power, and her beneficence" (178).

Northrop Frye says in "Myth as Information" that "to grow out of something is in part to outgrow it" (Frye 70); this describes precisely the relationship between the myth of Demeter and the female discourse that Laurence gives voice to by way of her Manawaka heroines. In Bernice Lever's 1975 interview with Laurence, "Literature and Canadian Culture," Laurence talks about the necessity for Canadian writers to 'forge' new myths:

> For some time now, we have been writing very much out of our own culture, our own background and our own heritage.... If Canadian writers can do anything, it is to give Canadians a very strong sense of who they are, where they came from and where they may be going. Our writers can affect this struggle simply, *by forging our myths and giving voice to our history, to our legends, to our cultural being*....[my italics] (Margaret Laurence 27)

In order for Canadian artists to 'give voice' to a uniquely Canadian ethos, it is necessary to have the language, the discourse by which to do so. Uncovering this discourse is something many Canadian writers have been involved in, but Laurence is one of those who has been most instrumental in doing so, and in particular from a female perspective.

Part III: Discourse

> *What I expect, yearn for, from my writing/ women's writing is an articulation of a secret and uninvented language:*
> *I want to dare to inscribe my body on the page.* (Aritha Van Herk, "Of Viscera and Vital Questions" Language in Her Eye 273).

Earlier, the female discourse that is the focus here was referred to as the 'hidden terrain.' Despite the ease with which the myth of Demeter is juxtaposed with the Manawaka novels, the female discourse that arises out of this juxtaposition is itself rather nebulous, an unnameable/untameable territory with constantly shifting borders. In her essay "Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous states that:

> It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded - which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in

> areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate. (Pyschoanalysis and Feminism 226)

This passage helps to underscore the importance of what Laurence does with her female heroines in terms of allowing them to give voice to issues and concerns endemic to the lives of prairie women. First, Cixous suggests that a female discourse cannot be 'enclosed'; this is all to the good, since to be enclosed or shut off implies stagnation. She also states that such a discourse is beyond theorizing or coding; this is not to suggest that any critical thinking on the subject is fruitless, but that it takes place in a sphere outside traditional analysis. However, I would suggest that, through her characterizations of the Manawaka women, Laurence does in fact not only help to elucidate this hidden female discourse, but also helps to successfully bring it into the mainstream, thus bringing it into the sphere of traditional analysis. How successful she has been depends largely on what one's perspective is. It could be argued that the fact that The Diviners has been the target of some fundamentalist groups who have tried to have it banned from high schools indicates that the novel touches on some critical issues that have to be dealt with at some point.

Be that as it may, the mixed and fervent reactions to this issue on all sides affirm Laurence's identity as an "automatism breaker," and her success at, in Cixous' words, "Inscrib[ing] the breath of the whole woman" (Cixous 225).

In doing so, Laurence has helped begin the process of uncovering the hidden terrain of Canadian female discourse.

Employing the Demeter myth to delve for female prairie discourse in Laurence's fiction may appear to be an unnecessarily roundabout and questionable approach; after all, Laurence's Manawaka novels are separated from the Demeter myth by centuries of political, artistic and social development. Critics such as Aritha Van Herk ("Eulalias of Spinsters and Undertakers" 1988), Constance Rooke ("A Feminist Reading of *The Stone Angel*" 1982) and Theo Quayle Dombrowski ("Word and Fact: Laurence and the Problem of Language" 1979), to name but a few, exemplify the ongoing critical engagement with how Laurence employs language. To examine female discourse in the Manawaka novels via the Demeter myth imposes certain problems, not the least of which is to muddy the analysis unnecessarily. Another problem, alluded to earlier, is the patriarchal bias that Purkiss warns of as being inherent in the Demeter myth. Yet another potential problem is the obvious and simple fact--but no less worth mentioning--that Demeter is a goddess, one of the immortals, and Laurence's women are very human indeed.

Nonetheless, Demeter resonates strongly in Laurence's writing, as Warren Stephenson's article "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in *A Jest of God*" (1976) and Stephanie Demetrakopoulos' "Laurence's Fiction: A Revisioning of Feminine Archetypes" (1982) demonstrate, in addition to

Helen Buss's work discussed earlier. These critics confirm that there is an undeniable connection between Laurence's Manawaka novels and the myth of Demeter. Demetrakopoulos' article in particular offers a useful overview of how Laurence 'revisions' the classical greek female goddess figures within her own artistic vision, and in doing so, Demetrakopoulos states, Laurence is "making a radical change in the whole literary tradition by re-telling from a woman's point of view traditional and archetypal feminine life patterns that have been portrayed hitherto by male authors only" (Canadian Literature 93 Summer 1982, 42). Accepting that Laurence 'revisions' feminine experience via the Demeter myth, it is logical to assume that the discourse resulting from this revisioning process will be somewhat distinctive. It is this assumption that underlies the purpose of this analysis and is a partial response to the question Demetrakopoulos poses at the end of her article as to "what in Canadian culture is producing women writers like Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Gabrielle Roy" ("Laurence's Fiction" 55). In addition to the valid suggestions she makes--the absence of the "go west" motif, a lack of a strong national identity, among others (55)--it is the contention here that the prairies offer a unique medium for creative expression, and that Laurence uses mythological imagery as one of the ways in which to give voice to a female prairie discourse.

The development of this discourse is linear, beginning

with Hagar in The Stone Angel and culminating with Morag in The Diviners. Demeter's loss of Persephone and their eventual reunion will be used as a metaphorical representation of the move into discourse and identity of each of the four Manawaka heroines*(see Note). As each of the Manawaka women becomes acquainted with her own unique discourse, Demeter's presence will be illuminated in various ways: there are mythological and biblical references; a persistent theme of maternity; and natural imagery, especially of birds and water. In particular, the water imagery resonates strongly throughout the Manawaka novels. The association of water with Christian rites of baptism and purification are intertwined with the importance of water in the purifying rites of the Eleusinain Mysteries. These themes and imagery are used in conjunction with revealing the sexual and maternal identities of the Manawaka women. Demeter is a powerful mother-figure; but she is also, by way of her Persephone aspect, symbolic of the loss of virginity that signals the end of childhood and the beginning of womanhood.

The discussion of the four novels will focus on the strength and inherent ability of the Manawaka women to connect with Demeter and, simultaneously, to discover their own discourse. For Hagar, this is a struggle that is very nearly beyond her. She does succeed, somewhat; but her success at learning to give voice to--and thus *experience*--her joys and sorrows comes only after a lifetime of avoiding a

connection with her Demeter self. For this reason she represents what can be termed as a point of departure for the development of discourse.

Rachel, like Hagar, is voiceless. But, unlike the older woman, she is acutely aware of her own voicelessness and recognizes the necessity of having the courage to speak openly and honestly. Trapped in a perpetual Persephone role, she is imprisoned in a vicious circle: until she learns to speak out, she will remain trapped; but she is trapped because she is voiceless. Her eventual ascent into her Demeter self comes about only when she discovers the way out of her imprisonment.

Stacey's connection to Demeter is through her own potent maternal self; but that maternity is under attack from the patriarchal forces of the external world. Because Stacey lacks a strong sense of her own identity, she is fractured, forced to negotiate between the demands of her own intuitive Demeter self and the cold winds of reason. She learns to reconcile these divergent aspects of her existence without sacrificing her own inherent Demeter aspect.

Morag is the culmination of the search for discourse. Just as Demeter pursues, like a "bird over land and water" (Appendix 103) her lost daughter, Morag pursues her own unique visions of love, personal mythology, and autonomy. Her story is the embodiment of the Manawaka quest for discourse, beginning in the refuse of Manawaka and culminating in her own artistic and personal independence.

Morag develops a self-awareness like that of Demeter when she commands that a temple be built for her worship: Morag learns to value herself with intensity, and is therefore able to articulate freely and joyfully her own discourse.

The discourse articulated by the Manawaka women has a familiar structure, very similar to a quest motif. For the present purpose its development will be depicted as consisting of three parts: exile; search for autonomy/identity; and reconciliation. Demeter's search for Persephone has resonances of the quest motif, and, in conjunction with that of the Manawaka women, new possibilities will suggest themselves as to how women can re-figure their own experience.

A further discussion of the nature of female prairie discourse, its development through the Manawaka works, and its connections with the myth of Demeter will occur in Chapter Six.

(*Note: Laurence's A Bird in the House, the other Manawaka work, has been excluded from this study due to its somewhat episodic structure, in contrast with the novels, and to the somewhat restricted character development of its chief protagonist, Vanessa MacLeod.)

Chapter One: Hagar

Her Father's Voice

> *Now she brought a terrible year on mankind, for she withheld growth from the earth, and no seed came up, and all the fruits of the earth were withering....*(Luke 53)

Demeter symbolizes earthly and female fertility: the concept of birth and rebirth, growth and richness, is inherent in her. She is the eternal mother. But to be a mother, and to be Demeter, requires the understanding of the *language* of motherhood, the universal language of mothers passed on to their daughters; to be without this language is to stifle Demeter. This is the language that Hagar lacks, and so her own Demeter aspect is silenced.

The delineation of the Demeter myth in the Manawaka novels begins at what might be described as a point of negativity, with Hagar in The Stone Angel. Demeter has a negative presence in the novel in that she is, for the most part, hidden from view until very late in Hagar's life and in the text itself. This is especially true for her maternal aspects, which we know constitute a major part of her importance and power. This suppression of Demeter, which can be described as a fervent refusal on the part of Hagar to acknowledge her presence, provides the point of departure for the uncovering of a discourse indemic to the prairie heroine. This negative point of departure is necessary and valuable in that it not only underscores the development of discourse but provides the impetus for doing so.

Hagar is an infuriating and yet fascinating character.

Early on in the novel Hagar shows herself to be a difficult, stubborn and opinionated old woman, and it is easy to sympathize with her long-suffering and patient son Marvin and his wife Doris. Yet it becomes clear that Hagar is a complex character, as she begins,"rampant with memory" (Stone 3), to contemplate the various threads that constitute her life.

Ultimately, Hagar redeems herself in the reader's eye by the novel's end by committing a final, genuine act of mothering (such acts having been rare in her life): she blesses her son Marvin, when she is confined to a hospital bed that she knows she will never leave again:

> It's in my mind to ask his pardon, but that's not what he wants from me.
> "You've not been cranky, Marvin. You've been good to me, always. A better son than John."
> The dead don't bear a grudge nor seek a blessing. The dead don't rest uneasy. Only the living. Marvin, looking at me from anxious elderly eyes, believes me. It doesn't occur to him that a person in my place would ever lie. (Stone 272)

Words of blessing do not come easy to Hagar; she has been, for most of her life, a willing purveyor of her father's doctrine of familial pride and adherence to a belief in social strictures which disallow any show of emotion or weakness. Her few, cautious words to Marvin counteract a lifetime's behavior of dismissing or suppressing the expression of genuinely tender and compassionate feeling, and constitute a remarkable triumph for her. She comforts her staid, conservative and devoted son with a vision, for the most part

illusory, of her maternal love. While it is something of a deception, it is also an act of greatness because she is, for the first and last time in her life, giving voice to the Demeter aspect of herself.

Throughout her life Hagar has confined her maternal cares and worries within her mind, choosing rather to speak plainly and without sentimentality, which she associates with weakness and femaleness. A perfect juxtaposition to the moving deathbed scene is an earlier scene, when Marvin takes his leave of Hagar to go to war; their interaction typifies Hagar's mode of communication:

> ...I wanted all at once to hold him tightly, plead with him against all reason and reality, not to go. But I did not want to embarrass both of us, not have him think I'd taken leave of my senses. While I was hesitating, he spoke first.
> "I guess I won't be seeing you for quite a while," he said. "Think you'll be all right, here?"
> "All right?" I was released from my dithering, and could be practical once more. "Of course we'll be all right, Marvin--why shouldn't we be?..."
> (114)

Hagar is relieved that she can be 'practical' in a situation that cries out for an emotional interaction between mother and child; it is both a poignant moment and an absurdist one. How much more agreeable would it not be, especially for the unfortunate Marvin, if Hagar had reacted as Demeter did at Persephone's abduction, and "tor[n] the headdress about her ambrosial hair with her own dear hands and threw [sic] off the dark covering from both her shoulders"

(Appendix 103); while Marvin would no doubt have fainted from embarrassment and shock, at least he would have no doubts that his mother loved him.

For Hagar the masculine doctrine of pride and self-control supersedes the spontaneous expression of natural maternal love, a pattern which has dominated her life to the point that, as she comes to see near her death, she has been emotionally paralyzed. Imprisoned by her ailing body on a hospital bed, Hagar realizes suddenly, with anguish, that she has always wanted "simply to rejoice" and to "speak the heart's truth," but that knowledge has been hidden away in a "cave too deeply buried" (Stone 261). Like Demeter hiding away in a cave, deprived of her daughter, and thus depriving the earth of its life, Hagar has spent her life in an emotional wilderness. Her life can be viewed as an unconscious journey to escape from the arid, inward purgatory she has condemned herself to, in order to connect with that hidden, suppressed part of herself, her Demeter aspect.

The daughter of a Scots-born, self-made man, Hagar was compliant material for her father's materialistic philosophy. Jason Currie was one of those individuals who had helped to conquer the prairies, one of what Hagar calls "fledgling pharaohs in an uncouth land" (1). He defined himself by his own material success and by the high regard with which he believed himself to be held in by his peers. Artist Emily Carr describes in her autobiography Growing Pains (1946) the source of the philosophy that people like

Jason Currie adhered to:

> ...People did not want to see beneath surfaces. The West was ultraconservative. They had transported their ideas at the time of their migration, a generation or two back....these Western settlers had firmly adhered to their old, old, outworn methods...(228)

Emily Carr explains this in relation to the resistance to her own art; but whether it is art or social respectability, it is this philosophy, imported and forced in Canadian soil, that has such a profound effect on how Hagar sees herself. The purveyors of this materialist philosophy, men such as Jason Currie, are engaged in a battle for supremacy with the land. Rather than establishing a sympathetic relationship with the land, accepting what it offers and recognizing its need for respect--not unlike the spiritual reverence Native culture has always accorded it--these 'pharaohs' invade the wilderness and usurp its bounty for themselves, setting up their imperialistic perogative in place of its disinterested autonomy. The land is there to be plundered and conquered, a policy already established by the Hudson's Bay Company when Jason Currie arrives. This is strangely mimetic of the supplanting of the Great Goddess by the aggressive Aryans as described by Merlin Stone in "The Great Goddess: Who Was She?" (1976): the invaders swept in with their patriarchal religion, and by either incorporating Demeter and other fertility goddesses into their religion, or simply destroying them altogether, they installed their own paradigm of patriarchal religious beliefs (The Politics of Women's Spirituality 15-6). Hagar is a direct heir of this

legacy, without the intervention of a strong female model--a mother--to teach her the skills she needs to negotiate within this patriarchal, hierarchical structure. So Hagar is estranged from the land, in direct contrast to other heroines, who find fulfillment of a kind through direct engagement with Nature. Annis Pratt describes it as a "lifelong allegiance to the green world" that allows those heroines to "achieve selfhood through a creative solitude" (Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction 127). This is not to suggest that Hagar is unaware of the landscape she is born into; her observations of her surroundings are vivid and sensual. When she escapes to the empty cannery by the ocean, she is acutely aware of her surroundings:

> ...The sea is green and clear. In the shallows I can see to the bottom, down where the stones which are actually dun and dull olive and slate have been changed underwater and shimmer wetly as though they were garnets and opals and slabs of jade. A dark bulb of kelp floats languidly like a mermaid, trailing its strands and frilled leaves of brownish yellow hair....(167)

But Hagar does not achieve sufficient detachment from her father's voice inside her head to be able to tap into the creative and spiritual potential inherent in the land, as Morag in The Diviners does. She is denying that part of herself, Demeter as Lady of the Beasts, and must therefore be content with observing the landscape instead of engaging with it.

Hagar is indoctrinated early into Jason Currie's philosophy and adopts his standards for herself. As a six-year-old, she is "strutting down the sidewalk like a pint-

sized peacock, resplendent, haughty, hoity-toity, Jason Currie's black-haired daughter" (4). She learns early on not to challenge her father's standards, as when she notices insects in a barrel of sultanas in her father's store:

> "Oh, look! The funniest wee things, scampering--"
> I laughed at them as they burrowed, the legs so quick and miniature you could hardly see them, delighted that they'd dare appear there and flout my father's mighty moustache and his ire.
> "Mind your manners, miss!" (7)

Hagar is punished later, but infuriates her father when she refuses to cry, which prompts her father to say, with some pride, that she is like him: "'You take after me,' he said, as though that made everything clear. 'You've got backbone, I'll give you that.'"(7).

Hagar does indeed take after her father, and this proves to be as much of a punishment as a source of pride, for she is never able to escape his legacy of haughtiness and intolerance. The standards set by Jason Currie are met only by Jason Currie; even Hagar, despite her obvious resemblance to him, fails him by being born the wrong sex. Her unlucky brothers take after their mother (a woman Hagar entertains only contempt for because she was foolish and weak enough to die giving birth to her), and their lives are made a misery by Jason Currie's undisguised disappointment in them.

Thus it begins early on, the impressions, the expectations and beliefs that shape Hagar's pysche. To use Cixous' definition, Hagar's *breath* is inscribed early but erroneously; having learned to associate femininity with a

deplorable weakness, she rejects her natural birthright of female discourse and learns instead to speak with her father's voice.

Inwardly, however, her father's voice battles with Hagar herself, who is not unaware of her own dichotomy. It is her father's voice, with its doctrine of respectability and iron-hard Puritanism, that so often triumphs in these inward battles, usually with tragic consequences. In one of the book's most poignant scenes, when Hagar's brother Dan is delirious, dying of pneumonia, her other brother Matt asks her to impersonate their dead mother for him:

> But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize. To play at being her--it was beyond me. (21)

Hagar is torn by anguish and remorse, wanting "to do the thing he asked" (21); but it is her abhorrence of weakness that wins out. Ultimately it is Matt who drapes himself with their mother's shawl and cradles Dan's head in his lap. The maternal part of Hagar's pysche that understands the need to recreate a mother for a dying boy is not strong enough to exert itself. This establishes a life-long pattern for Hagar, the suppression of the maternal in favor of the pragmatical.

As much as she is aware of her own dichotomy, Hagar is unable to shake the legacy of her father's voice until late in her life, almost too late. Most of her adult life she spends cowering in a cave, like grieving Demeter separated from Persephone, grieving the separation from the part of herself

that would allow full expression of her feminine self, allow her to 'rejoice' for both her sexuality and her motherhood. But, unlike Demeter, Hagar also fears her femininity and its attendant vulnerability, so much so that she is unable to bring about a reunion with that lost part of herself.

Being thus divided, Hagar's own discourse has a barren quality, not unlike the prairies during the Depression when the soil drifted away and everything was lifeless and arid. The Depression has had a powerful influence on prairie fiction, functioning as a mute, insatiable force dominating the lives of prairie dwellers without conscience, sifting into their consciousness like an infection. Its influence is obvious in the work of writers like Laurence who were affected intimately by the Depression, as the mythical qualities of the prairie land itself are mutated and thus magnified. The Depression effectively dismantled the *garden of Eden* quality often accorded to the prairies by earlier writers such as Nellie McClung and R.J.C. Stead, and brought about a more apocalyptic vision of life in the West. Laurence Ricou describes it as "an overriding sense of decay and of want about this world" (Vertical Man/Horizontal World 117). It has also been referred to as symbolic of man's estrangement from himself and from his society, emblematic of existential angst.

The devastation inflicted on the prairies is what strikes Hagar immediately when she returns to Manawaka after being away for years. When her son John takes her to the

Shipley farmstead, she notices that much of the landscape is as she remembered it--"The crows still cawed, and overhead the telephone wires still twanged all up and down the washboard roads" (Stone 150); but she senses it has been irrevocably changed. The landscape she sees with her eyes is only a mockery:

> The sunflowers had risen beside the barn as always, fed by the melting snow in spring, but they'd had no other water this year--their tall stalks were hollow and brown, and the heavy heads hung over, the segments empty as unfilled honeycombs, for the petals had fallen and the centers had dried before the seeds could form. (150)

Demeter is clearly absent from this landscape; she has cloistered herself within her temple to mourn her lost daughter . Hagar, however, is intimately connected to it. She has been called back to it by death, and, like the illness that is sapping Bram's life, Hagar is sapped and depleted by Manawaka's aridity. She is herself like the barren sunflowers, able to stand against the forces of Nature, but lacking the vigorous internal flow of life that would allow her to flourish and bloom. This lack is evident in her interactions with those people to whom she should be open and loving. While Bram lies, "like an ancient child," dying on their marriage bed, Hagar contemplates him with a combination of loathing and regret, his sexuality and vitality replaced by feebleness, now as helpless as a child (162). It is only now, when he is beyond her help, that she feels compelled to connect with him, to apologize for the lost years and the pain, but it is too late; Bram is beyond Hagar.

When she was a newlywed, Hagar experienced sexual fulfillment, when her "blood and vitals [rose] to meet his" (70). Then she is at one with the living force in Nature, like "a compelled maple after a winter," whose sap begins to flow (71). But, Hagar being Hagar, she hid her lust, and allowed Bram to believe that their couplings were no more than his imposition upon her. How unlike John and his girlfriend Arlene making love in the kitchen of the Shipley place, while, unknown to them, Hagar is in the front room and forced to listen:

> It seemed incredible that such a spate of unapologetic life should flourish in this mean and crabbed world. His final cry was inarticulate, the voice of the whirlwind. Hers was different, the words born from her throat. "Oh my love--oh my love--" (185-6)

Hagar is moved by their open passion for one another, and possibly jealous, for within an instant she is plotting how to separate them.

Her couplings with Bram often ended with his apologies for having troubled her. In the corner of their bedroom stood Hagar's trunk, still labeled with her maiden name, *Miss H. Currie* (70). It is a tangible symbol of Hagar's refusal to give up her identity as Jason Currie's daughter, and she is thus unable to complete the transformation into Hagar Shipley, Bram's wife and lover. Because of this she is never able to cry out in her moment of ecstasy, to articulate her love. It is only when she is old, old, long past lovemaking, that she realizes how misplaced her sense of pride was in the bedroom, and how much harm she did to the man who fathered her

children.

Hagar had left him, with her younger son John, years before. The very things that drew her to Bram--his frank virility, his disregard of public opinion, his crudity--in effect, all the characteristics that made him the antithesis of her father, are what prompted her to leave for the mythical land of the coast. Marriage to Bram provided her with escape from the gilded cage her father kept her in as his hostess, his bookkeeper, and his trophy of social accomplishment. But marriage to Bram also brought Hagar down in the social stratosphere of Manawaka, and this loss of status in the town that her father helped to build is the one thing she cannot bear.

The biblical Hagar, the maid of Abraham's wife Sarah, conceives a son by Abraham and is consequently contemptuous of her mistress' barrenness. For her pride, after Sarah herself conceives a child, Hagar is sent with her son Ishmael into the wilderness of Beersheba, to wander there in the desert with only a bottle of water and bread (Gen. 21.14). Laurence's Hagar is driven from Manawaka by her own pride, the familial pride that cannot accept her own fall from grace.

Hagar has convinced herself that John takes after Jason Currie, and so her self-imposed exile is her attempt to protect John from Bram's bad example. Thus safe from Bram's influence, she attempts to indoctrinate John with her father's philosophy of work and ambition, just as she herself

had been indoctrinated. But John is not made of the same pliable stuff as his mother:

> Sometimes he would grow keen, and plan with me, embellishing what I'd said, improving on it, telling me how it would be. And other times he'd listen, lulled and wordless, his restlessness ceasing for a moment, as though I'd been humming him asleep as I used to when he was small. (139)

Like her brothers Matt and Dan, who were disappointments to Jason Currie, John is unable to live up to Hagar's expectations, but tells her that she "always bet on the wrong horse," and that she should have placed her hopes on Marvin (211). John escapes her, first by going back to his father, and then by death. Hagar is left alone. This is her legacy of a lifetime spent avoiding her own essential self, her Demeter self, attempting to live through her men and through her own pride:

> Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched. Oh, my two, my dead. Dead by your own hands or by mine? (261)

Unlike the biblical Hagar, whose son Ishmael fathered a nation, Laurence's Hagar loses the son who accompanied her to the wilderness of the west coast, leaving her utterly alone in a void of her own making. Having chosen the patriarchal doctrine of her father over the claims of her Demeter self, hers is a double loss; the loss of her men and the loss of her essential self.

Like Demeter, hidden in The Stone Angel, Persephone is evasive. Early in the novel there is a suggestion that she

may have been present through Tina, Hagar's granddaughter. As Hagar sits and contemplates the bottle of *Lily of the Valley* cologne given to her by Tina, she remembers that this was the flower used in Manawaka to "weave into the wreaths of the dead," a faint resonance of Persephone's role as Queen of the Dead (28). But for the most part Persephone and Tina are absent from the text. This is interesting in that Hagar clearly has great affection for her granddaughter, but it is unclear how much this affection is returned. Tina's absence enhances Hagar's own fractured state, her separation from her own essential femininity, which is in turn reflected in Hagar's own discourse.

Hagar herself never fulfills her own Persephone aspect until late in her life, almost too late. As Jason Currie's daughter she lacks the moderating influence and example of a mother to help her make the connection with her Persephone aspect and the transition into Demeter. Her maturation into womanhood is problematic, guided as she is by the feeble femininity of Auntie Doll and the insistently masculine influence of her father.

Only once does Hagar speak openly and honestly of all that is hidden in the deep caves of herself, and in doing so fulfills her long neglected Persephone self. After being told that she will be put in a nursing home, Hagar flees to an empty cannery by the sea. To get to the cannery involves a climb down a precarious stairway, overgrown with foliage and shaded, its banister rotting away. Hagar proceeds carefully

down, and her descent down to a lonely place where the absence of vibrant human life is evident is in fact her descent into the Underworld, and into her Persephone self. Significantly Hagar has forgotten to bring water with her; since water is the symbol of purification and redemption, she must play out her Persephone aspect first before she will be allowed to drink the water of her own redemption.

It is in the empty cannery she encounters Murray F. Lees, a stranger with a wine bottle, haunted by his own demons. He permits himself to function as Hagar's confessor, and she his, and together they help to exorcise the painful legacy of the past. Murray helps Hagar to reconcile herself to John's death by pretending to be, for a moment, John. Like Hermes, sent to deliver Persephone from the Underworld, Murray helps Hagar to move, for a moment, into the light. Hagar speaks in her own voice, articulating her own feelings, and Jason Currie's presence is finally relegated to the past. Alone in the abandoned cannery, among the nets and the boxes, Hagar and Murray are redeemed.

Before her death, Hagar is permitted to fulfill her role as Demeter momentarily. She is desperately ill, confined to her hospital bed, but she voluntarily hauls her body out of bed to fetch a bedpan for the young girl in the next bed. It is a strangely moving act. The bedpan is a symbolic holy grail, a "shiny steel grail"(269) Hagar calls it, and thus her tortured movement across the floor signifies her search for spiritual fulfillment. More significantly, Hagar is all

Demeter in this moment; she is no longer concerned about her own pain but concerned to alleviate the suffering of Sandra, the young girl: "Pain and humiliation have been only words to her. Suddenly I'm incensed at it, the unfairness. She shouldn't have to find out these things at her age" (268). This is a mere moment in time, but it helps to alleviate much of Hagar's inward pain; when she stands, bedpan/grail in hand, trying to catch her breath, she wonders who she really did it for, the child or herself. Afterwards, she and Sandra laugh together, conspiratorially and joyfully.

A short time later, Hagar dies, but not until one final scene is played out. A "holy terror" (Marvin's words) to the end, she seizes a glass of water from the nurse; well she might grab the glass, because it is her baptismal cup, her own holy grail: "I wrest from her the glass, full of water to be had for the taking. I hold it in my own hands" (275). The water imagery so closely aligned to both Demeter and to Christianity signifies purification; and so Hagar, in her own immutable and independent way, brings about her own redemption.

For the most part Hagar is unrepentant to the end. She considers briefly praying for forgiveness, but all she can manage is "*Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg*" (274). She dies a belligerent and opinionated old woman, as tough as the "wild and gaudy" cowslips that invaded the Manawaka cemetery (3). She never escapes the voice of her father inside her head, and never learns to give voice fully

and openly to her own discourse.

At the same time, Hagar's long life, in spite of all the obstacles in her path, both inflicted upon her and the result of her own bloody-mindedness, testify to a very important aspect of the female discourse Laurence articulates, and that is the ability to survive. Laurence explains in "Ten Years' Sentences" (1969) that it was during the writing of The Stone Angel that the theme of freedom integral to her earlier writing had now changed to "that of survival, the attempt of the personality to survive with some dignity, toting the load of excess mental baggage that everyone carries,until the moment of death" (Canadian Literature 41, 14). Despite her own fractured state and her inability to give full voice to her love, Hagar rides out her life, such as it is, weathered like the stone angel that marks her mother's grave.

Hagar's distance from her own Demeter aspect represents the point of departure in the development of discourse. It is perhaps not coincidental that The Stone Angel, the first novel to be analyzed in terms of discourse, is that of the eldest of the Manawaka women: she is not yet sufficiently removed from the materialistic, patriachal legacy of her father to be able to establish a connection with her hidden Demeter self and the Demeter aspect couched within the Canadian landscape. She connects only briefly with her Demeter aspect; it is Rachel who articulates what Hagar is not able to, the desire to become Demeter.

Chapter Two: Rachel

The Mute Child

Persphone cries out in fear and protest as the cord of her tie to her mother, her unconscious youthfulness, is violently cut.... (Luke 57)

To become Demeter it is necessary to first be Persephone, the symbol of innocent, feminine childhood. Only when that innocence is taken away does the transformation into Demeter begin, and bring about the necessary escape from the Underworld into the light of female fertility and maturity. Innocence retained for too long becomes a trap and loses its appeal, becoming isolation. If Persephone stays too long underground, she is in danger of not completing her transition into Demeter; being arrested in continuous childhood will result in her suffocation.

In A Jest of God Rachel Cameron is constantly in search of balance, trying to reconcile the demands of her outer existence as schoolteacher and unmarried daughter with those of her hidden self that longs for sexual, emotional and maternal fulfillment. In this respect she resembles Hagar, but there the similarity ends. For Hagar, fractured though she is, is unquestionably a Demeter figure, as demonstrated by her two spontaneous acts of mothering, to Marvin and to Sandra Wong. Rachel is in a type of limbo, caught like a fly between two windows, wavering between her identification as daughter/Persephone and her need to discover her maternal/Demeter self.

Of all the Manawaka women, it is Rachel who is most closely aligned with Persephone. There are the obvious parallels with Persephone's journey through the Underworld and her connection with Hades in Rachel's relationship with the mature men in her life, in particular her father the undertaker. Much has been written about Rachel's Persephone aspects, such as Helen Buss' chapter "Rachel and Stacey: The Voiceless Vision" (Buss 31-53); but what is interesting about her identification with the goddess is that, ultimately, through Laurence's reworking of the myth, Rachel is able to reconcile her divergent aspects into an autonomous whole, and does it more successfully than Hagar.

Rachel's chances for maternal and sexual fulfillment are unlikely, but, nonetheless, she represents one step further along in the quest to personal recognition and the discourse that articulates that quest.

Unlike Hagar, Rachel exudes a sense of vulnerability, a result of the tension between her inner self and the demands of her outward existence. In the schoolyard during recess, Rachel compares her own dress sense to that of her friend and fellow-teacher Calla, and then, suffering from remorse for her own smugness, she envisions herself wrapped in sackcloth, "flapping around my knees. And the ashes, where are they? I dramatize myself. I always did. No one would ever know it from the outside, where I'm too quiet" (Jest 5). It is true that Rachel's rather demure and conservative demeanor belies the kinetic life inside her head, the result of her

disappointment with the state of her life and a healthy libido looking for an outlet. Like Hagar, Rachel is a member of a class for whom respectability in all matters is a given, but she is not as convinced of its immutability as Hagar is. She resents it when it stifles her, but yet she clings to it as well, like a drowning person to a lifesaver.

Walking home one day Rachel contemplates the hairdos of two of her former students, now teenagers. Rachel admires them, in spite of herself--for their lack of gaucherie while wearing their outlandish creations of back-combing and hair spray, and in being able to figure how to do it in the first place. She is envious of their self-assured audacity and the instinct they seem to have for survival. She imagines herself going into her salon and telling the girl to do her hair "like candy floss, a high cone of it, and gold," instead of its usual "nondescript waves, mole brown" (15); but it is her lack of confidence and her own conservatism that dismisses the whole idea as ridiculous.

Rachel strives to be unnoticeable, to blend in with the landscape and thus escape detection. How unlike the radiant Demeter:

> ...Beauty breathed around and about her and a delicious odor was wafted from her fragrant garments. The radiance from the immortal person of the goddess shone far and wide and her golden hair flowed down her shoulders....(Appendix 109)

Rachel's insistence on the same respectably dull hairstyle is indicative of her fear of violation; the routine of her life, that she chafes at, protects her. She remains the

child Persephone before she is abducted, lulled into false security by the *familiarity* of her life. Unlike Persephone the child, Rachel unconsciously craves the moment of violation/abduction that will propel her into full maturity and autonomy, but she lacks as yet the language to bring about that transition.

Even if Rachel possessed enough self-assurance to wear a "high golden cone" of hair, she would still hold back because of her fear that the sight of herself with candy-floss hair might give her mother with her weak heart a fatal shock. Despite the fact that Rachel is twice the age of the two young girls she observed, she is still very much confined to the role of her mother's daughter, an identification she chafes at, resentful of the obligations it places upon her. May Cameron sees herself (or so Rachel believes) as the epitome of the respectable senior lady. She seems sexless; Rachel sometimes speculates about the sex life of her parents, which, except for the presence of herself and her sister Stacey, seems to have been non-existent.

Even if Rachel dared to ask, May Cameron would respond with horror, and admonish her daughter for asking about things 'that aren't nice.' The closest she will go to discussing sex is to refer to virginity as a *"woman's most precious possession"* and to say cryptically that Rachel's father "was never one to make many demands upon me; that's one thing you could say for him" (111-2).

Meanwhile, thirty-four-year-old Rachel agonizes in her

bedroom with its little-girl furniture, trapped in her socially enforced abstinence. Her only consolation is her erotic fantasies, wherein she makes love with a faceless stranger, her 'shadow prince,' in a protected bower of trees. Even in the privacy of her own mind, however, Rachel is still her mother's daughter:

> ...Then they are lying along one another, their skins slippery. His hands, his mouth are on the wet warm skin of her inner thighs. Now--
> I didn't. I didn't. It was only to be able to sleep. The shadow prince. Am I unbalanced? Or only laughable? That's worse, much worse. (22)

Rachel is unable to admit to herself that masturbation, the only means she has of physically consoling herself, is anything but abnormal. She cannot even bring herself, in her own mind, to name it. This fantasy is followed by a dream in which Rachel is a small child in her father the undertaker's place of work; it is a re-enactment of the girl Persephone in the Underworld and of Hades, the "king in state," holding court with the painted corpses (22). The dream ends with her mother's singing, "the stylish tremolo, the ladies' choir voice" (23). Rachel in her fantasy and in her dream is in search of sexual fulfillment; when Rachel awakes, her mother's singing represents the denial of sexual desire. This illustrates the tension that defines Rachel's inner existence, a constant denial of her sensual being while in constant search of it.

Helen Luke, in a detailed analysis of Persephone, could be describing Rachel:

> It is through the father that the daughter first becomes conscious of her self. When there is no adequate father-image in a girl's life, the identity of daughter and mother can assume a tremendous intensity, or else when the father-image is very negative and frightening, the daughter may unconsciously take on the mother's problem in a peculiarly deep way, sometimes carrying it all her life...and so remaining crippled in her effort to face her own fate in freedom. (Luke 56)

Rachel has inherited, or perhaps absorbed, something of her mother's unwillingness to admit that there is a hidden life, that of sex and blood, beyond the dictates of propriety and good manners. May Cameron is not even able to say the word *pregnant*, let alone contemplate how a young girl might find herself so. Rachel is aggravated not only by her mother's insistence on skirting the key word, but by her constant fixation on the appearance of things. The fact that the mother in question has chosen to keep her twin babies is not considered on its own merit as a brave, difficult and possibly rash decision, but, rather, that it is an audacious and therefore unacceptable act.

Helen Buss, in her detailed analysis of the dynamics of the relationship between Rachel and her mother, argues that May Cameron has herself been stunted in her own female development; she is the product of a patriarchy that:

> ...has only the transformative relationship of the mother and son. Thus, the pyschological maturation symbolized by the Demeter-Kore motif is not facilitated for mothers and daughters living in such a world. But the urge for such a union still exists....(Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence 39)

Without a healthy mother figure to teach Rachel the discourse

of femininity that will help her achieve pyschic and physical wholeness, Rachel must look to other agents to bring about her transformation into Demeter.

Rachel's father chose a life of retreat, downstairs among the silent corpses and the liquor bottles. He absented himself from life, and consequently from Rachel. She grew up swinging between her mother's fluttery attentions and her father's shut door; with no more response from his door than *"run away Rachel run away"* (22) she is left with only her mother to guide her into adulthood. She inwardly rebels against the intolerant social dictates her mother adheres to, but being 'crippled' by her close identification to her mother can do nothing to combat them until she learns to disengage herself from her mother.

Rachel's mode of communication is tightly controlled. She desperately fears letting anything slip through her speech and demeanor that might give the merest hint that she is not precisely what she appears to be--namely, an unmarried schoolteacher and dutiful daughter. Fractured as she is, Rachel is naturally incapable of expressing herself freely, being too much in fear of the consequences. She later confesses to her lover Nick Kazlik that, as a child, she envied the children at 'his end of town' (the Ukrainian side of Manawaka) because it seemed to her that they were "not so boxed in, maybe. More outspoken. More able to speak out" (108). She cannot even bring herself to change her hairstyle, worrying that she might become laughable, a condition that would be as intolerable as

being from 'the wrong side of the tracks.'

Her interaction with other people, especially with men, parallels a tightrope walker's act; one small slip and Rachel might send herself plunging into public disgrace. Men unnerve her; she becomes even more tightly inheld once she is faced with the blatant fact of their maleness. Her encounters with short and pompous school principal Willard Siddley are typical of this tension; as he speaks at and down to Rachel, sitting white-faced and nervous behind her desk, she involuntarily finds herself looking at his "spotted and furry" hands, wanting to touch them, although she finds him repulsive (10). Always the withheld parts of her pysche are in danger of shooting out like geysers, while her self-control develops fault-lines under the stress.

It is only when Rachel finally gives way under the stress that she can begin the long climb out of her *unfinished* Persephone role, arrested in pubescence in the underworld of her socially correct, spiritually stifled mother, and her defeated, alcoholic father. Her escape comes about unexpectedly and involuntarily, a necessary condition, since Rachel would not have permitted it otherwise. Helen Buss states that her "growth...is first sparked, then nurtured and later freed by her relationship with a mother-surrogate [Rachel's friend Calla] whose love and loyalty give Rachel the ability to 'become the mother'"(Mother and Daughter 40). Calla brings her a potted hyacinth, "bulbously in bud and just about to give birth to the purple-blue blossom" (11); the

hyacinth is symbolic not only of spring's burgeoning fruitfulness, but, more importantly, it recalls the beautiful narcissus with its hundred sweet-scented blossoms, sent up by Gaia to tempt virginal Persephone to the place of her abduction. Significantly, Rachel perceives the plant to be a bribe by Calla to persuade her to accompany her to the Tabernacle. She agrees to go to the next service, as usual suppressing her own reluctance to mollify her friend.

On the way to the Tabernacle, Rachel sees her reflection in a store-window, and, to her eyes, her raincoat looks like "some ancient robe" (35); hooded and robed, purified by the rain like the Eleusinain intiate sprinkled with water (Mylonas 237), Rachel proceeds to the Tabernacle like a virginal initiate to her own abduction. Disturbed by the crush of people in the Tabernacle and its cave-like atmosphere, Rachel becomes agitated. The hymns give rise to apocalyptic visions in her brain, and she fears that Calla may begin to speak in tongues, a possibility that outrages her ingrained sense of propriety: "how can anyone look and face anyone else, in the face of this sinister foolery? I can't look" (43). As her panic begins to well up, Rachel tightens her self-control and waits, suspended. When the man next to her groans, she is shocked by "the sound's openness, the admitted quality of it" (44). Then:

> Chattering, crying, ululating, the forbidden transformed cryptically to nonsense, dragged from the crypt, stolen and shouted, the shuddering of it, the fear, the breaking, the release, the grieving--
> Not Calla's voice. Mine. Oh my God. Mine.

The voice of Rachel. (44-5)

When Persephone is abducted, she is a virgin, a *kore*; when she is reunited with her mother Demeter, she has eaten the fruit of the pomegranate, and because of this she is no longer a virgin but a queen, a woman and a goddess of fertility. She has been initiated into the sphere of female sexuality and consequently transformed. The voice of Rachel is the voice of Persephone when she is carried away; it is a cry of anguish and fear at what is unknown but inevitable. Rachel has finally erupted into discourse.

The experience at the Tabernacle has catalyzed the transformation of Rachel from daughter/Persephone to mother/Demeter. The transformation needs time, however: Demeter wandered the earth for a year looking for Persephone, who was in a state of transformation. Rachel is terrified by her experience and tries to avoid any reminder of it, including Calla herself. She is as yet unaware that because of her eruption at the Tabernacle she is on a journey to an unknown destination.

The transformation is subtle, at first, requiring the arrival of Nick Kazlik in Manawaka to function as Rachel's Hades who robs her of her virginity. It begins as it should, with Rachel's own discourse. When Nick calls her to go out on her mother's bridge night, Rachel accepts; her agreement is a radical act because previously these evenings were sacrosanct, with Rachel catering dutifully to May Cameron and her cronies. When she discovers Rachel's defection, May

Cameron employs her weapons of insidious maternal guilt, a strategy that in the past would have succeeded in forcing Rachel to capitulate:

> "Well, dear, you do what you think best. I'd never suggest you shouldn't go. Only, on a bridge night--well, never mind. We'll just have to stop playing while I do the serving, that's all" (123)

It nearly succeeds; it is difficult throwing off the villeinage of guilt when it has been lifelong. But May Cameron is no match for the attractions of Nick Kazlik:

> *I won't go then*--I find the words are there, already in my throat, and yet I force them back. This newfound ruthlessness exhilarates me. I won't turn back. If I do, I'm done for (123-4)

What was unknown to her when she cried out in the Tabernacle is surfacing in her now. She begins to bring into the light her desires and disappointments, to give voice to them, to articulate her need for connection. One night, her mind filled with Nick and the promises his presence suggests to her but does not fulfill, she knocks on the door of Hector Jonas, the undertaker who has taken over her father's business. Rachel tries to explain that she needs someone to talk to:

> "...--and I couldn't sleep, and I saw your light was on, and--"
> My voice ends, and I'm standing here, tall as a shadow, transparent, shivering. Then I don't care. Only one thing matters. *Let me come in.*
> "Let me come in."
> That was my voice? That pridelessness? It doesn't matter. Suddenly it doesn't matter at all to me. (146)

Hector Jonas, surprised but obliging, lets her in, into

the underworld her father once inhabited. She discovers there is no longer any trace of him in the polished and antiseptic cave Hector has created. Nora Stovel describes Hector as a Hades figure, as he escorts Rachel "back to life in a grotesque parody of a ritual rebirth" (Rachel's Children: Margaret Laurence's *A Jest of God* 48); the parallel between Hector Jonas the undertaker and the King of the Underworld is clear. But he is also a shaman, helping Rachel to exorcise her father's ghost from her mind, by telling her that her father had "the kind of life he wanted most" (153).

Sitting in the chapel, like Jonah (and seemingly *with* Jonah, Hector Jonas) in the belly of the whale, Rachel begins to understand that it is possible to alter one's life, by altering the perceptions of one's life. She has discovered this only because she has learned to ask, to cry out for salvation like Jonah who was cast "in the midst of the seas" (Jon.2.3), to demand entry into the labyrinths of her undiscovered recesses.

Rachel's unfulfilled desire for a child is one of her most grievous needs. She confides to Nick that it troubles her with her Grade Two students when they leave her class and move on without her. James Doherty in particular arouses Rachel's maternal instincts unbearably; she finds herself unreasonably jealous of his mother because she--but not Rachel--has the right to caress his red hair. With Rachel, he is distant and distrustful, which so hurts her that she hurts him in turn, hitting him across the face with a ruler. She does not reveal

this to Nick, but says, rather, that "there are some you can't help liking better than others, and then you feel--I don't know--it seems kind of futile" (132).

Her relationship with Nick promises a child, but only momentarily. The *summer house*, as Nick calls it, is a patch of grass by the river, looking over fields of "grain beginning to turn the pale colour of ripeness with the autumn coming on" (175-6). This image evokes Demeter as the Corn-Goddess, vividly fertile. Appropriately, it is here that Rachel finally articulates to Nick her maternal desire: "If I had a child, I'd like it to be yours" (181). Nick turns away and fabricates an escape for himself, denying Rachel both the promise of himself and of a child. Rachel begins to realize that she is truly alone.

For a time she believes herself to be pregnant, a circumstance both glorious and disastrous. Rachel is still in the process of transformation, and she is initially not able to contemplate life as a single mother, in Manawaka, with her mother. Such a circumstance is intolerable: the social disgrace, the financial difficulties, and most importantly, her mother's disapproval and anguish are altogether too daunting for her. Abortion is not a viable alternative for a small-town person such as Rachel, who would not know how to begin to find the ways and means. Thus, in a state of limbo, she goes to visit the neglected Calla, and discovers that perhaps this too is possible. "What if I was pregnant, Calla?" Rachel asks (215). She has not asked for help from her friend,

but her need is voiced in silence, and Calla hears it. Calla responds to her need, offering practical and clear-sighted advice, and her unconditional help: "...As for the baby, well, my Lord, I've looked after many a kid before" (215). Calla does not judge or denigrate her, and her refusal to do so helps Rachel to see her situation in a new light, free of social condemnation. She begins to believe in her own ability to survive on her own terms: "My mother's tricky heart will just have to take its own chances" (216).

The promise of a child is an illusion. It is when Rachel discovers this that she begins to exhibit her Demeter self, that part that is maternal. Sitting in Dr. Raven's office, she listens to him dismiss any possibility of pregnancy for "a sensible girl like yourself" (218). His assumption of her abstinence enrages her, not just because it is demeaning to her femininity, but because it threatens to invalidate any possibility of children:

> I can't believe he's saying it, and yet it's only too easy to believe. No words for my anger could ever be foul or wounding enough against him, for what he's saying. I could slash gouges out of his seemly face with my nails. I could hurl at him a voice as berserk as any car crash. (218)

Her fury evokes that of Demeter when she learns the circumstances of Persephone's abduction (Appendix 104); and she is also the biblical Rachel, crying "Give me children, or else I die" (Gen. 30.1). Like the plotting of Zeus and Hades that robs Demeter of her child, and the old Testament god denying Rachel, the wife of Jacob, her children, Dr. Raven's

conservative and patriarchal sensibilities effectively do the same to Laurence's Rachel, by refusing to entertain the possibility she could be with child. It is worth noting that "raven" can mean to "obtain or capture by violence"; the oppressive conservatism of Manawaka, as embodied by Dr. Raven, that cannot accept an unmarried mother, effectively robs Rachel of her children.

The promise of a child is nothing more than a tumour; yet Rachel mourns as violently and tenderly as any mother, as Demeter would: "My speaking voice, and then only that other voice, wordless and terrible, the voice of some woman mourning for her children" (221).

Her transformation into Demeter is accomplished when she has surgery to remove the tumour, the illusory child. When she wakes up, she feels keenly the absence of Nick/Hades: a "gate closed, quite quietly," on Rachel/Persephone, relegating her to the recesses of memory. Under anaesthetic, Rachel/Demeter has spoken: *"I am the mother now"* (225). Thus, the relationship of Rachel with her mother has been transformed. After making illicit love with Nick and enduring the anguish and joy of a possible pregnancy, she has finally laid to rest the voices of social respectability and sexual oppression that have manipulated her for so long.

In recognition of this transformation, Rachel chooses to leave Manawaka for good, for the mythical land in the west. On the bus leaving Manawaka, her "elderly child" (245) sleeping next to her, Rachel begins to contemplate the

possibilities that are open to her. Having thrown off the shackles of social propriety, Rachel recognizes her own possibilities for becoming a peripheral figure, beyond social considerations, and therefore free to "drift and settle, and drift and settle" (245). As Demeter, Rachel has reclaimed the discourse that was rightfully hers but denied to her.

By the end of A Jest of God Rachel has learned to see herself with a clearer vision and to accept that, whatever her future is, it will be everything and it will be nothing. While her opportunities for becoming Demeter the mother in the physical sense are diminishing, the discourse she has learned will allow her to express her Demeter self in other ways, and on the bus leaving Manawaka she already anticipates establishing a relationship with the children of another Demeter, her sister Stacey. While it will never be the same as experiencing her own maternity, what is significant is that Rachel has learned the language of reconciliation.

Chapter Three: Stacey

Mother Tongue

For nine days she wanders over the earth in fear and sorrow, searching for her daughter but not ***understanding.*** (Luke 58)

The abduction of Persephone plunges Demeter into grief, for she has been robbed of the most essential aspect of herself, her child. She is the eternal mother; without her daughter she is disoriented and wanders frantically in search of her child. It is not until Hecate, torch in hand, gives her news--that is to say, *knowledge*--of her child's abduction that Demeter is able to react with purpose. The acquisition of knowledge, self-knowledge, is what Stacey is searching for.

A delightful juxtaposition is set up in the opening paragraphs of The Fire-Dwellers. Stacey Cameron MacAindra, suburban housewife, is lying in her bed surveying her rather untidy bedroom, just prior to dragging herself downstairs to make breakfast. In the midst of this domestic scene, there is a copy of Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough lying innocuously on her nighttable. The incongruity of finding that paramount text of anthropological scholarship as the chosen reading matter of a harassed middle-class mother is emblematic of Stacey's fractured existence.

This is a novel teeming with mythical symbolism. As Stacey stumbles through the days leading up to her fortieth birthday, attempting to cope with a life that threatens to fall apart, her imaginative and dream life is filled with

exotic, fiery and lush imagery, a refuge for a pysche in crisis. She is in a state of emotional and pyschic confusion, and, like Hagar and her own sister Rachel, there is an ongoing battle between the discourses of her inner and outer selves.

Christl Verduyn, in "Language, Body and Identity in Margaret Laurence's *The Fire-Dwellers*," describes female-oriented discourse as a foreign language:

> In a world shaped and described predominantly by men, the values of their own gender group prevail in and through the dominant discourse. The possibly different values of the "other" gender--of women--are thus minimized, marginalized or muted. Women's perspectives remain largely unarticulated--unspoken, silenced, outside of language. The struggle then is with language, the frustration arising from language's deficiencies when it comes to women's (self) expression, the goal in any cases being quite simply to "put it into words." (Margaret Laurence: An Appreciation 129)

Stacey is in search of this muted language of women, a discourse that will permit her to reconcile her conflicting inner and outer speaking voices, and thus allow her a more positive interaction with the people around her. She needs a language that expresses the unique experience of motherhood without subversiveness or apology, the language of Demeter when she instructs mortals to build her temple:"I am Demeter, esteemed and honored as the greatest benefit and joy to mortals and immortals....And I myself shall teach my rites, so that performing them with reverence you may propitiate my heart" (Appendix 109). Demeter's language is powerful and self-affirming.

Of the Manawaka women looked at so far, Stacey is the one who is most Demeter-like, in that she is very much connected to her maternal aspects, although there are times when Stacey seriously doubts the wisdom of having four children. She is also closer to sexual fulfillment in that she has a reasonably healthy sex life with husband Mac, although she admits to wanting to "hold an entire army between my legs" (Fire-Dwellers 16). Yet there is a hidden part of herself that she longs to connect with, just as Rachel longs to connect with her maternal/sexual selves. This is evidenced by the night courses she enrolls in, the solitary, seemingly aimless walks, a heavy reliance on alcohol and, most significantly, her overwhelming desire to speak openly and candidly with someone.

Stacey is a woman in search of self-validation. Her rational self tells her she is a lucky woman to have four beautiful children, a house and a husband; nonetheless, she is desperate for an identity that is hers alone. After all, Demeter has an identity other than the mother of Persephone and the goddess of fertility: she is an Olympian, which implies a certain degree of autonomy, as her actions in relation to Persephone's disappearance confirm.

In an effort to connect with this hidden identity, Stacey resorts to a lively fantasy life and to memories of her childhood as a means of rooting out the Stacey that existed before pablum, mortgages and shopping the sales, before life on Bluejay Crescent. Laurence's technique of setting up

Stacey's inner dialogue alongside the chaos of her outer life reflects this disjointedness: Stacey's thoughts are preceded by dashes, her memories by indented paragraphs, and her fantasies and dreams are italicized. Mixed in with all this is the dialogue between the characters without quotation marks, and the text itself becomes mimetic of Stacey's confusion. There is a manic quality to the narrative that reflects the clashing of domestic upheaval against inner reflectiveness. Somehow Stacey has lost herself and is constantly plagued by doubt about her self-worth. As she launches on a journey of self-discovery to reunite with her lost self, she must at the same time try to maintain her hold (albeit a tenuous one) on her domestic and personal life.

Not surprisingly, it is her femaleness that creates much of her sense of fracture and dissonance. Somehow she must reconcile the contrary messages she is bombarded with about both her function as a mother and her sexual desirability. In one of her many retreats to the past, she remembers the birth of her eldest child, Katie: "'*I did it. She's here. She's alive. Who'd believe I could have borne a kid this beautiful?* (Or any kind of kid, for that matter)'" (11). These are the thoughts of a justifiably proud and somewhat awed new mother. Stacey follows this happy memory with a reminder to herself that she has to:

> ...keep quiet about all that. Restraint. Some wiseguy is always telling you how you're sapping the national strength. Overprotective. Or else, you don't really care about them--you're just compensating because you're guilty on account of the fact that in your

> core you're trying to possess them, like hypnosis. Or something....(11)

As the outer world, in the form of women's magazines and television, is busy trying to persuade Stacey that she is maternally incompetent, she constantly critiques her own behavior, and invariably finds herself wanting. As she struggles to conform to some media-induced pyschological rating system that is suspiciously nebulous, she is continually undermined by her own self-doubt. Instead of becoming wiser and more tolerant with age and experience, Stacey begins to fear her increasing loss of control. In one such moment Stacey attempts to stop the squabbling of her sons, Ian and Duncan:

> Cut it out! Both of you! You hear? *Slam.* Only when she has done it does Stacey realize she has grabbed their shoulders and flung them both to the floor with as much force as she could muster. (13)

Stacey agonizes over her sudden lack of control and begins to question her own fitness as a mother. Yet, as she torments herself, she also recognizes that parenting is a ceaseless outpouring of energy, its recipients like needy black holes: "They nourish me and yet they devour me, too" (14).

Demeter derives much of her symbolic importance from her status as the goddess of fertility, and her sphere of power relates to female fertility as much as to that of the earth. She represents a holistic vision of womanliness, incorporating youth, beauty, fertility, and power; when Hecate unites with Demeter and Persephone to form the Triple Goddess, she brings with her wisdom and magic. In the *Homeric*

Hymn to Demeter Persephone's mother is constantly referred to in reverential terms, with her 'dear' hands, 'Demeter of the lovely crown,' her 'beautiful eyes,' her 'ambrosial hair,' the 'goddess of goddesses'; on her own or in union with Persephone and Hecate, Demeter is a compelling and most attractive figure.

Poor Stacey: if anyone were to suggest to her that she is an incarnate of the 'goddess of goddesses' she would be thrilled, but ultimately disbelieving. For she has the proof of articles, such as "Nine Ways the Modern Mum May Be Ruining Her Daughter"(11) and "Mummy is the Root of All Evil?" (273) to reassure her that she is flawed and suspect.

More insidious than this is the way in which Mac perceives Stacey in her role, or, more accurately, how Stacey believes Mac perceives her. She feels torn between following her own instincts as a mother and trying to satisfy Mac's expectations of her. When Duncan wakes up crying in the middle of the night, Stacey instinctively goes to him: "It's as though I'm compelled. What I cannot bear is the thought that one of them is trapped in his nightmare, alone in there" (22). Mac is angered by her instant response to Duncan's crying, believing that by always going to him she will emasculate him: "'If you want a pansy for a son, Stacey, you're going the right way about it'" (23). He is unappeasable, so Stacey agrees to coddle Duncan less, to satisfy Mac, thus plunging herself into confusion and doubt:

> --I will. I will anything. I will turn myself inside out. I will dance on the head of a pin. I will yodel from the top of the nearest dogwood tree. I will promise anything, for peace. Then I'll curse myself for it, and I'll curse you, too. Oh Mac. (24)

It seems Stacey is never able to find the middle ground between her own compulsions and instincts and those of the external world. It is Mac's perception of her as a mother that is most difficult to take; she is frequently unable to stand up to his disapproval, voiced or not. His dissatisfaction gnaws at her very core, undermining her maternal identity. Her primary function is to nurture their children; unlike Mac, who functions as both parent and breadwinner, Stacey has no identity outside her home. Thus, when Mac makes his dissatisfaction apparent, she has no defenses, being caught between her own maternal instincts and her loyalty to Mac.

A particularly poignant example of this dichotomy occurs when Stacey compares the birth of Duncan with that of Jen, the youngest child. Mac's response at Jen's arrival is positive and therefore reassuring to Stacey: "Mac, handing her two dozen yellow chrysanthemums. *Hey, a girl, eh? You did well*" (19). The arrival of Duncan, who, in Stacey's eyes, "isn't like any other person on this earth" fails to elicit anything more from Mac than an inquiry into Stacey's well-being (18). Stacey is unable to reconcile these disparate responses to her children, and, because she cannot bear the thought that Duncan is less than he should be in Mac's eyes, she takes the blame upon herself for his obvious disappointment.

This pendulous existence Stacey has between her instinctive maternity and the cool reason of the outside world is embodied in her memory of attending a class about Ancient Greek Drama. She chooses to side with Clytemnestra, empathizing with her anger at the sacrifice of her daughter Iphigenia by her husband Agamemnon. But Stacey is informed by the young male academic teaching the course that she does not have "quite the right slant on it" (27). Stacey outwardly gives in to him, and inwardly rages at him and his superior education that makes her feel ignorant. More importantly, his insistence on Clytemnestra's guilt being greater than that of Agamemnon undermines Stacey's own faith in motherhood, the most important aspect of her own identity.

This passage suggests that maternal instinct, as portrayed by both Stacey and Clytemnestra, has a code of justice beyond that of cool rationale, a code that is capable of existing independently of reason. Certainly Demeter's maternal aspect is not derived of reason but of inherent Nature, which does not need to be cultivated in order to exist, as reason must. The young academic requires his education in order to lecture Stacey on the ethics of Clytemnestra's behavior; but Stacey requires only her own nature to be a mother and thus to empathize with Clytemnestra. Helen Luke states that "myth, particularly feminine myth, is not logical. Its truth is of another order" (Luke 63). Yet Stacey is also a corporeal being with tangible links to the world of reason,albeit such pedestrian concerns as grocery

shopping or paying the bills. Stacey is trying to maintain connection with her Demeter self, her instinctive, maternal aspect, but there is very little outside support for anything that has not been scrutinized, analyzed and dismantled in the name of reason.

It is worth noting that the confrontations between Stacey and Mac's boss Thor Thorlakson are suggestive of the fight for power between the Great Goddess and the Aryan male gods. Although *Thor* is the name of the viking god of fertility, he is in fact Poseidon, the water god and Demeter's male counterpart. Stacey and Thor are instant enemies. In the context of the story, this is due in part to their mutual citizenship in Manawaka, although she does not initially realize this. But it is significant that Stacey, as Demeter, comes up against her male counterpart and that they are antipathetic to one another, engaged in a battle for control over Mac. It is significant that in contrast to the fertile nature of land, Demeter's special sphere of influence, the sea is viewed as being *arid* and *unproductive.* Ultimately, Thor leaves the field of battle, leaving Stacey relieved, if no more in control. While the true reasons for his departure are inexplicable, Stacey recognizes that he was in fact a fraud, and her own faith in her ability to confront the *strawmen* of life is strengthened a little.

More importantly, Stacey's victory over Thor can be interpreted as a bid for valourizing female power, and as such it suggests that Laurence is attempting to change the

traditional patriarchal view of maternity. One aspect of Demeter's story *not* mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is when Poseidon--an aggressive and notorious philanderer--pursues her as she searches for Persephone; when she transforms into a mare to escape him, he tricks her by changing into a stallion and mates with her. It is viewed as a union of the female and male fertility deities; and yet, although the union does result in the birth of a daughter and the divine horse Arion, it is a rape. Unlike Demeter, Stacey defeats her opponent/counterpart.

The antagonism between Thor and Stacey and Stacey's instinctive empathy for Clytemnestra suggest possibilities for revisioning the goddess myth in such a way as to preserve some of her symbolic power and as a means of enhancing the maternal aspect of female existence.

"What goes on inside isn't ever the same as what goes on outside. It's a disease I've picked up somewhere" (28). Stacey must somehow heal herself of this disease, and so she searches for ways of re-interpreting herself and her existence. She escapes into exotic sexual fantasies in which she is naturally beautiful and unflawed, not the *old swayback* that marriage and motherhood has turned her into, with stretch marks like "little silver worms in parallel processions" marching across her body (15). But while she can control her fantasies, her dreams are a source of torment, symbolizing the state of chaos Stacey exists in. Often apocalyptic, they are filled with natural imagery in danger

of destruction, and Stacey must make impossible decisions in the face of disaster, such as which child to save, if she can save only one.

In one dream Stacey is walking through a forest, carrying something under her arm, which turns out to be her own head. It is an obvious evocation of Medusa, mirroring Stacey's own lack of identity. Medusa is also seen in Freudian terms as a symbol of castration, thus reflecting Stacey's own fears of emasculating her sons. More importantly, however, it stresses the need for Stacey to connect with her own voice, to discover her own discourse. With no head, Stacey cannot communicate, and it is only through some kind of communication that she can maintain her sanity in the chaos of her existence. The dream emphasizes Stacey's voicelessness, and, thus, her helplessness.

Stacey is a voluble individual, so language in itself is not the problem. Having someone to really listen to her is. Stacey does find someone who not only can hear what she is saying ("Mac--listen") but is willing to listen. After a fight with Mac one night, Stacey leaves the house, and instinctively making for the sea, finds herself on a deserted beach at night. Here she meets Luke Venturi, a younger man unlike Mac or any other man she has known. Like Nick Kazlik and Murray F. Lees, Luke is Stacey's *pyschopompos,* like Hermes sent to retrieve Persephone from the Underworld. Some critics have criticized Laurence's portrayal of him, saying his characterization is faulty and he is unbelievable. And

yet on his own Luke is not a particularly exotic character, nor does he have to be. He is simply an independent and self-assured young man, not weighted down by domestic concerns or career goals. He is important in that he functions as a symbol of what Stacey believes she wants--freedom, lack of inhibition, liberation from socially prescribed roles--but ultimately discovers she either already has it or does not need it. It is only in his presence that she articulates freely her confusion and self-doubt, and his gift to her is his willingness to hear her: "How funny you are, merwoman. Who held you down? Was it for too long?" (161). He does not attempt to judge Stacey as a mother or wife, or to undermine her self worth. He listens, and he responds.

It is significant that he refers to Stacey as 'merwoman' (161): the mermaid is a divided creature, her fish tail and her human torso a symbol of the confusion between sexuality and reason. A mermaid is also symbolic of drowning victims; an apt description for Stacey, who is in danger of drowning in her own confusion and self-doubt. When she first meets Luke on the beach, she has instinctively known to seek out the sea; the water imagery evokes, along with Christian rites of baptism and redemption, the purification rites for the initiates into the Eleusinian Mysteries. It also evokes the image of Demeter, disguised as an old woman in her search for Persephone, resting by the Maiden well (Appendix 104). Stacey's brief sojourns to the beach in search of Luke are part of her search for her own Demeter self.

Their affair, such as it is, does not last long. Nor does it absolve Stacey of the necessity to reconcile her inner and outer selves; but their encounter has helped Stacey to crystallize some of her self-doubts and so reject them. It is impossible to fight an unseen enemy, and much of what plagues Stacey is formless until it is articulated. Luke talks to her of a place up north in the Cariboo, a small Indian village with ancient totem poles:

> You want to ask them if they know any longer what the poles mean, or if it's a language which has got lost and now there isn't anything to replace it except silence and sometimes the howling of men who've been separated from themselves for so long that it's only a dim memory, a kind of violent mourning....(203)

Luke asks her to come with him to the Cariboo, to the village with its mute totem poles. He is offering her freedom, the very thing she thinks she wants. She has been remembering her youth, when she could swim farther than anyone else, when she was free from care and wholly, completely herself. Luke's invitation seems to promise all that; but she turns him down. That is his gift to her, offering her what she cannot have, because it forces Stacey to begin to define herself in relation to the life she has, the young woman that she was, and what she desires. In terms of the Demeter myth, Stacey has reconciled herself to the loss of Persephone, who is in fact Stacey herself as a young woman. She is ready now to enter in the next phase of her life, that of Hecate, goddess of wisdom.

Her life is not easier after her encounter with Luke, but

she begins the process of clearing her vision and tackling the barriers to communication between herself and the people she loves. She must endure the death of Mac's friend Buckle, a man she disliked and with whom she nearly had sex; her father-in-law's failing eyesight, which necessitates his moving in with Stacey and her family; meeting up with Valentine Tonnerre from Manawaka, now a resident of skid row, who speaks cryptically of the "Long trip. The last one" (238); the attempted suicide of her neighbor Tess Fogler, whom Stacey had always envied for being glamorous and self-contained; and, most importantly, the near-drowning of Duncan. This last event helps to coalesce for Stacey the divergent aspects of herself. By nearly losing her child, she discovers that she is, first and last, a mother--a discovery enhanced by her acceptance of herself as she is, not as she used to be or wants to be:

> ...I used to think there would be a blinding flash of light someday, and then I would be wise and calm and would know how to cope with everything and my kids would rise up and call me blessed. Now I see that whatever I'm like, I'm pretty well stuck with it for life. Hell of a revelation that turned out to be. (268)

Just after this revelation, little Jen, who has tried Stacey's patience with her "warbling" and "yitter yatter," refusing to talk, says to her mother, "Hi Mum. Want tea?" (268). At the precise moment that Stacey learns to see herself with honesty, to accept her failings and to reconcile her inner and outer selves, little Jen erupts into voice.

Life does not cease to terrify Stacey; nonetheless, she

has learned to deal with it on its terms. She has learned not only to speak with her own voice, out of her own experience, but how to make others to hear, in terms that they understand, even if it is in silence. Her discourse is that of reconciliation, which is not so terrible a thing, Stacey realizes: "Give me another forty years, Lord, and I may mutate into a matriarch" (277). The language of reconciliation is also the language of hope. Stacey has learned the language of Demeter, that promises rebirth and renewal, and, above all, accords motherhood its rightful legitimacy.

Chapter Four: Morag

The Myth-Maker

> *All through her nine day search...the goddess had nevertheless carried burning torches in her hand, symbol perhaps of that small fire of attention which must be kept burning through the darkness of our journey when all meaning seems to have left us....*(Luke 59)

The torches that Demeter carries in her wanderings, as she searches for her lost daughter Persephone, symbolize her own self-knowledge. It is her identity and power as the Goddess of fertility that fends off her total despair; without this identity she would be undone by her grief, deprived of purpose and function. As Morag mourns for her wandering daughter Pique, she has her identity as a writer to sustain her and is able to keep the torches of self-knowledge burning.

Morag Gunn in The Diviners is a sojourner, searching for her own 'real country' where she and her pen can rest for good. So it is that she comes to own the cabin by the river with its hidden life and its currents that seem to flow against one another. It has been a long journey from Manawaka to the cabin by the river, a long time that Morag has wandered; like Demeter with her torches, wandering the earth looking for Persephone, Morag has been searching for the lost part of herself.

Morag is a writer, or, as she calls herself in a cynical moment, "Liar, more likely. Weaving fabrications" (The Diviners 25). She is acutely aware of the ambiguous nature of her craft, that the words she writes are as likely to be

false as true, realizing that "fiction was more true than fact. Or that fact was in fact fiction" (25). Whether her words be false or true, fact or fiction, she is engaged in trying to uncover what is hidden and yet known, to bring out into the bright light of consciousness what has been buried so deep in the recesses of unconscious memory. She periodically has doubts about the validity of what she does, sometimes comparing herself to Royland, the Old Man of the River, who divines water. She notes that he at least has evidence of his success: "Water. Real wet water. There to be felt and tasted" (452). Despite her occasional doubts, Morag knows that her kind of 'divining' is important too, whether she gets to see the results of her labour or not.

As a writer Morag is consciously aware of discourse and its ability to do good or evil, and the necessity for every individual to discover her own true voice. It is necessary not only for personal identification but to re-affirm one's membership in it is the shared discourse articulating communal myths and history that unite a group of individuals into an entity called society. Myths are the means by which a society articulates its character and its belief system. They may or may not refer to historical events or explain the origin of a people, a belief system or rituals; they are as varied in origin and intent as the myth-makers themselves. Yet they are not merely stories; they elucidate and thus reaffirm for a community its own unique identity and its inherent right to exist. Thus they are a version of truth;

however wildly fanciful or fantastic they may be, myths are essential to the personal and communal self-validation of a people.

In Bernice Levers's 1975 interview with her, Laurence discusses the necessity for Canadian writers to help create new myths for Canadians ("Literature and Culture" Margaret Laurence 24-32); in fact, her own Manawaka stories have contributed to the birthing of a Canadian mythology, especially one rooted in the prairies. Morag is not only the protagonist of The Diviners but a symbolic representation of this search for identity. Her story is a quest for personal identity and wholeness that translates into that of a community, a group of people of diverse ancestry, separated by language and culture, who claim a shared citizenship on Canadian soil. The fact that Morag is a female character on a quest enhances her importance as a myth-maker. Claude Lévi-Strauss likens the mythology of a people to the various instrumental parts of a musical score: each myth articulates some important aspect of a society, and together the communal mythology is the sum of its parts (Classical Mythology 7). Morag's story is the quest of the female in search of her own discourse, in order to connect with her lost self; her story therefore illuminates a crucial element in a Canadian mythology, that of the female prairie dweller.

Morag does indeed discover her own voice, but not until she learns to acknowledge the "shadows" as well as the

"lights" of her own pysche (Atwood 24); it is only in doing so that she is able to articulate the discourse that has always been hers. Prior to this reclamation of discourse, however, Morag has had to deny great chunks of her history, and thus of her own self, in order to begin married life with Brooke Skelton. Ironically, their relationship begins with his role as her English professor: words and their creative manipulation is what draws them together; and ultimately, it destroys their union.

Brooke is intrigued by Morag's apparent lack of a past because it is as though, he says to her, "you were starting life now, newly" (195). Without a past, she is reborn, childlike, and compliant in his hands. Significantly, it is winter when they first come together, Persephone's season that is dormant but promises renewal. But for Morag, that renewal, while she is with Brooke, never materializes; she remains arrested in her dormant season. Instead, she becomes his perfect child-wife, and they 'play house' as it were, in their tastefully furnished apartment in Toronto. The perfect predictability of their life together, however, slowly suffocates Morag, as she is denied anything that threatens to undermine this insulated existence. Brooke is something of an ideal for Morag, an educated and cultivated man who loves and desires her; but he has his demons, the result of a childhood devoid of love, tyrannized by an exacting and unappeasable father. His demons are unreachable to Morag, and anything that threatens her and

Brooke's carefully constructed existence unnerves him. So Morag is kept, arrested, like Persephone, in an underworld of passivity and helplessness. Brooke/Hades, her jailor/husband imprisons her with his compulsive need for her undivided attention and love, monopolizing her life like an infant. By calling her "child" and "little one" he reinforces doubt in her own mind about her ability to reason for herself, thus providing her with an excuse to rely excessively on him.

Morag longs to have a child. Because of his own child-like dependence on Morag, Brooke can not bear the possibility of children, and so he glibly negotiates her into a corner:

> "...It's just that I don't think you quite realize how tied down we'd be. Also, a flat is hardly the place for a child."
> "Why don't we get a house,then? I hate this damn apartment." Morag hears her voice speaking; she sounds like a spoiled child.
> "I'm sorry to hear it," Brooke says, withdrawing his hand. "I always thought you liked the place. At least, that's what you said. I never realized it was such an ordeal for you to live here."
> "Oh Brooke, I'm sorry....." (222)

Brooke is a skilled and shrewd manipulator. By employing a combination of reason and physical movement (the withdrawing of his hand suggesting a withdrawal of his approval), he manages to convince Morag that her healthy desire to have children is somehow unreasonable and selfish.

When she turns to writing as a means of assuaging her desire to escape the triviality of her existence, Morag

unwittingly puts into motion the machinery that will provide her with escape. Brooke is infuriatingly smug when he reads the first draft of her novel, Spear of Innocence:

> "Well," he says at last, carefully, "it seems to me that the novel suffers from having a protagonist who is non-verbal, that is, she talks a a lot, but she can't communicate very well."
>
> "I know that. I know. That was part of the problem."
>
> "I also wonder," Brooke says, flicking pages, "if the main character--Lilac--expresses anything which we haven't known before?" (246)

For all his condescension, Brooke does not realize that Lilac's problem is also Morag's--the lack of voice. Nor does Morag, yet; but she knows that, however dismissive he may be towards her heroine, what she attempts to say is valid because "*she* says it" (247). That Morag recognizes the importance of Lilac's discourse, however incoherent she may be, signifies the beginning of her liberation.

She now instinctively knows not to tell Brooke she has submitted Spear of Innocence to a publisher; it is necessary not to provide him with means for further undermining her self-confidence. Its publication is the first step in Morag's bid for autonomy.

Manawaka is the lost part of herself that is demanding repatriation. It begins with the death of her foster-mother Prin, which necessitates Morag's return to all that she had naïvely thought could be left behind, forgotten. When she returns to Brooke, the process of transformation that is necessary to release Morag from her imprisonment has begun. She is beginning to lose her identity as Persephone,

child/wife, and, when Brooke, unthinking, calls her 'little one,' Morag finally erupts into lusty voice:

> *"Little one.* Brooke, I am twenty-eight years old, and I am five feet eight inches tall, which has always seemed too bloody christly tall to me but there it is, and by judas priest and all the sodden saints in fucking Beulah Land, I am stuck with it and I do not *mind* like I did once, in fact the reverse if you really want to know, for I've gone against it long enough, and I'm no actress at heart, then, and that's the everlasting christly truth of it." (256)

Although she is speaking with the voice of her foster-father Christie, it is her own bid for self-respect and autonomy. However, Brooke, shocked, is dismissive: "are you due to menstruate?" (256). Morag is struck dumb by his refusal to take her seriously: "*I do not know the sound of my own voice. Not yet, anyway*" (257). Recognizing this truth about herself brings her closer to reclaiming her own voice. This recognition is not unlike that of Laurence herself, when she realizes the necessity of writing in her own voice (Dance on the Earth).

Then Morag meets Jules Tonnerre, former classmate and one-time lover from Manawaka. This intrusion of her past into her present is what makes her begin to gather together the disparate and scattered parts of herself. Although Jules is the one who, as it were, 'deprived' Morag of her virginity (it was no rape, as it was done with her full participation) he is not a Hades figure but is more akin to Hermes guiding the dead to the River Styx. This is revealed when, after a fight with Brooke, Morag goes with Jules to his room and they make love:

"What I'm going to do," Morag says, "is, I'm taking off."
"Yeh? Think you can?"
"I have to. It's complicated, but I have to."
"So you had to do this first, eh?" He puts a hand between her legs and his fingers explore the triangle of hair there.
"How so?"
"Easy," Jules says. "Magic. You were doing magic, to get away. He was the only man in you before, eh?"
"Yes."
....
"I'm the *shaman*, eh?" he says. (272-3)

Making love with Jules is a deliberate and necessary act of betrayal on Morag's part, an act that begins to dissolve the bond between her Persephone self and Brooke/Hades. In allowing another man to enter her, she has allowed Brooke's exclusive rights over her body to be violated, and so has created an escape hatch for herself with an assurance that she can never return to Brooke.

Like Murray F. Lees for Hagar, like Hector Jonas for Rachel, and Luke Venturi for Stacey, Jules Tonnerre is Morag's *shaman*, helping her to begin the journey to the hidden recesses of herself. His intervention in her life, together with her new identity as a writer, functions as the necessary catalyst to Morag's transformation.

Manawaka, with all its attendant memories of isolation, grief, loneliness, desire and ostracism, is beginning to re-assert itself in her pysche. The Morag who lived--lives--in Manawaka can no longer survive in the sterile paradisal underworld of Brooke/Hades; so Morag, pregnant with Jules's child, finally and irrevocably

escapes.

Manawaka is the place of Morag's childhood. Orphaned young, she was brought up by Christie Logan, town garbageman, and his fat and simple-minded wife, Prin. Childhood is not, to use Brooke's phrase, "a golden era" (194). Morag suffers keenly the indignities of being the Scavenger's daughter in a town where respectability is the only accepted measurement of one's worth. She must endure the taunts of her schoolmates and the pitying looks of the town matrons. She learns to cope by developing a thick skin and fighting back, unlike her best friend Eva Winkler who "is gutless as a cleaned whitefish" (61).

Her other strategy for coping in a community where she is ostracized and marginalized is by reading and by scribbling her own stories. Much of her material comes from Christie, who will, when drunk, tell her marvellous--though highly questionable--stories about her ancestors, the Highlanders of Sutherland, and their expulsion from Scotland. In particular, Morag likes the stories of Piper Gunn and his woman Morag, who led the Highlanders to a better life in a new wilderness called Canada. These stories become imprinted on Morag's mind as 'Christie's Tales,' and form the core of her own personal mythology.

Christie's Tales help Morag to cultivate both personal and ancestral pride. The exploits of Piper Gunn and the Highlanders have, in fact, been audaciously plundered from history and recreated by Christie for Morag's benefit after

she learns that her own clan, the Gunns, have no chieftainship or coat of arms. In a town where many of the *haves* are of Scottish descent, this is hard medicine for Morag, a *have-not*, so Christie gives her a history and mythology to attach to her last name.

Like Christie, Morag learns to adapt the mythology given to her: she begins to write her own stories of Piper Gunn's woman Morag, who has the "*power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction*" (52). It is significant that Morag chooses Piper Gunn's *woman* to rewrite for herself, and not Piper Gunn himself, though he is clearly the hero of Christie's Tales. She is a young girl in search of models, and clearly she lacks them in her real life. Although the affection between Morag and Prin is tangible enough, Prin is limited, by body and by nature, in her capabilities to nurture Morag. Sadly, Prin is aware of her deficiences, and apologizes to Morag for them:

> "But now--I don't kind of know how to be any different, like. That's why I don't, you know, look after you better, sort of. I'm that sorry, Morag."
> Morag is crying. Holding onto Prin's awful fat belly wrapped around in the brown wraparound, Prin's good good good. (44)

Prin is not someone who could brave the threatening forests of a hostile environment and laugh, like Piper Gunn's woman could (at least she does in Morag's own version); so the young girl learns to look inward, and resort to her own imagination to understand and define her own femininity.

The mature Morag understands that her childhood and

youth in Manawaka were highly formative. It was then that she formed the basis of her own personal mythology and discovered her destiny as a writer. It was also then that she first connected with her sexual self through her contact with Jules Tonnerre and their love-making in his shanty in the valley by the river. It was then she learned that life is as cruel as it is benevolent, when, as a reporter for the *Manawaka Banner*, she must report the fire in the same valley that kills Jules's sister, Piquette, and her two children.

She also discovers that, regardless of how she dresses, talks, or succeeds, she will always remain the daughter of Christie the Scavenger. So she escapes, heeding the call of the train whistle that sounds so inviting to prairie people, symbolizing *escape* from the cold, the heat, the dust:

> The train clonks slowly into motion, and soon the wheels are spinning their steelsong *clickety-click-clickety-click*, and the town is receding. There go the rusty-red grain elevators, the tallest structures around here. There goes the cemetery. There go the Nuisance Grounds, forever and ever. (173)

Not forever: although Morag never again lives in Manawaka, she realizes years later that the town lives on in her brain. Her experience with Brooke teaches her that this is not so terrible a thing: what is more terrible is to deny its existence, because that is to deny the most fundamental part of herself.

Years later Morag makes another train journey, also a way of escape. On her first train journey Morag was young,

still Persephone. On her second, she is heading west, no longer Persephone but now Demeter, burgeoning with new life. Gazing out the window, Morag/Demeter is acutely aware of the life that lies hidden under the snow:

> The crocuses used to grow out of the snow. You would find them in pastures, the black-pitted dying snow still there, and the crocuses already growing, their greengrey featherstems, and the petals a pale greymauve. People who'd never lived hereabouts always imagined it was dull, bleak, hundreds of miles of nothing. They didn't know. They didn't know the renewal that came out of the dead cold. (282)

Morag is familiar with the prairies' ability to renew, because she was born there. And now she is renewed again, has escaped the cold once more and can begin the next phase of her life. Not long after she gives birth to Piquette, who will, in her own way, become Persephone.

As Piquette grows up, Morag works as a writer, and they move about, in search of a permanent home. During this time Morag begins to pass on to Piquette her own mythology, with stories about her grandfathers, 'Morag's Tale of Christie Logan,' and 'Morag's Tale of Lazarus Tonnerre.' Like Christie, Morag revisions the truth into myth for Piquette, not concerning herself with factual detail, knowing how suspect that can be. Christie taught her that years ago, saying, "It's all true and not true. Isn't that a bugger, now?" (88). He then told her a story about her birth father, Colin Gunn, in the Great War, which differed considerably from the official version contained in a book her gives her, *The 60th Canadian Field Artillery Battery Book*. His version

lacks the heroic narrative quality of the book, evoking, rather, the naked fear of young soldiers in the midst of artillery and cannons. Morag comes to see that Christie's version is perhaps the more truthful one.

While living in England, Morag and Piquette go to Scotland, ostensibly to discover the land of her ancestors, but . so so Morag can see, first hand, the domestic life of her lover Dan McRaith. Her trip teaches her two significant things. First of all, she realizes that the eloquent silences of Dan's wife Bridie, which he complains about, are, in fact, her only form of defense. She does not possess a discourse with which to protect herself against his dissatisfaction and unhappiness:

> And she has discovered, over the years, maybe with surprise, that her silences are more effective in reproaching him than any words of hers could possibly be. Does it give her any satisfaction to reproach him? Or is she at such times too enclosed in her own pain really to realize his at all? (389-90)

For Morag, wordsmith and sometimes liar, the possibility of communication without words is revelatory. Nonetheless, she properly interprets Bridie's silence as a form of imprisonment, because she can never openly articulate the movements of her soul. Carol Christ says that "without articulation, the self perishes" (Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest 6). To be silent is to communicate, but only by denial.

While there, Morag realizes that making a pilgrimage to Sutherland is not necessary. She discovers that, while it is

indeed the land of her ancestors, she, in fact, belongs to "Christie's real country," Manawaka and the mythical territory of Piper Gunn and his woman Morag. "The myths," she tells Dan, "are my reality" (391). This realization marks the beginning of yet another journey for Morag and Piquette, this time back to Canada. She buys the old Cooper homestead, the cabin by the river, that becomes Morag's final home. Like Stacey to the sea, and Hagar to the cannery, Morag instinctively is drawn to the river. When she sees the Goldenrod Realty (*golden rod* as in Demeter's golden scepter) advertising the homestead, it strikes her like "the spirit of God between the eyes" (413). Like Demeter, who comes to rest by the Maiden Well and thus sets in motion the events that will result in the building of her temple, Morag has finally "propitiated [her own] heart" (Appendix 109).

While Morag has finished her sojourn, Piquette must begin hers, in an attempt to reconcile the divergent parts of herself. It is especially important for her to meld together somehow her Scottish and Metis ancestries, which represent two peoples that share a history of antagonism, fighting over the same land. Piquette will have to find her own way out of this Underworld. It is a solitary and necessary journey, as Morag well knows, but, as a mother, she worries nonetheless.

Piquette's departure signals not only the departure of Persephone, but also the arrival of Hecate, goddess of wisdom. Like Stacey, Morag realizes that her own Persephone

aspect is gone, and that she must begin to turn her attentions to another sphere, away from youthfulness and fertility.

As for Morag herself, in her cabin by the river, she is now the sum of all her parts: Manawaka, Christie, Brooke, Jules, Dan. She has discovered the power of her own voice, that speaks her own mythical language:

> "So long, then.
> "So long. Go with God, Pique."
> "Ma, you have some pretty funny expressions."
> "Now, then, don't I just?" (450)

Morag is unapologetic. Her voice is a voice in which there is an echo of Christie, whose own voice contained echoes of Gaelic. There are the echoes of Jules's Metis lyricism, the brogue of Dan, and of Morag herself. Wherever the voices come from that are inherent in her own, she knows that their origin is not important, but that "the voice is there, and that she has heard these words which have been given to her. And will not deny what has been given" (433).

Morag/Demeter, fact and fiction, wordsmith and mythologizer, mother, daughter and woman, is what she is, and is so because she had the soul of Piper Gunn's woman, who dared and defied the hostile wilderness. She is Demeter born of the prairies, articulating her own language of maternal love, artistic vision and independence.

Conclusions

Her Own Voice

Examining the Manawaka novels via the Demeter myth posits many possibilities for defining a feminine discourse unique to the prairies. It is important to note that, however this discourse is defined, it is *not* enclosed or exclusive. Whatever conclusions are reached are never beyond revision; as more and younger women writers of divergent ancestry and varied experience write about their experiences in the Canadian landscape, this discourse will be recreated continuously.

Yet it is possible to posit some defining characteristics of this discourse, at least in Laurencean terms. As the area of female prairie discourse opens up, these characteristics will take on enhanced meaning, thus, hopefully, in turn, influencing the ways in which all Canadians, regardless of gender and ethnicity, see themselves.

The Manawakan discourse examined here has, as mentioned in the Introduction, a strong resemblance to the quest motif. It includes the hero/ine setting out in search of something; a journey through the underworld; and return to society. But, as Carol Schreier Rupprecht states in "Enlightening Shadows: Between Feminism and Archetypalism, Literature and Analysis," the quest has traditionally had very different functions and outcomes for female questers

than for male ones. For the male quester, the journey may be treacherous, but, ultimately, he returns with not only a heightened spiritual self-identity but acceptance and even adulation, and, thus, with an elevated position in his society. The female quester does not usually share this good fortune: for her the payment for her own heightened self-awareness is the sacrifice of her standing within her own society. By consciously departing from her society, she is required to give up social validity and security. Rupprecht states that, for women in twentieth century *bildungsroman*, "the quest for and of self is lonely and perilous; even if it goes well, a woman's return to society with a whole new self is doomed to failure" (C.G.Jung and the Humanities 288). Manawakan female discourse both underscores and undermines this prescription. While it is true that the quest has considerable social repercussions for the Manawaka women, especially for Morag, ultimately they are able to grow out of and beyond the place socially prescribed to them in a small prairie town. In other words, Morag, Stacey, Rachel and even Hagar outgrow their membership in Manawaka and recreate a place for themselves in the world.

The development of the discourse of the Manawaka women has three components: exile, search for autonomy, and reconciliation. Each of the women move through these stages, but variously. Hagar does not move very much beyond exile. Rachel and Stacey reach reconciliation, but at a

price. It is only Morag who embodies the complete journey, and thus is able to express most fully a female discourse.

Demeter's story reflects these components as well. Therefore each component will be examined in relation to both the myth of Demeter and the Manawaka novels, as a means of defining the characteristics of this discourse.

Exile/Loss

This represents the point of departure. For Demeter it is the abduction of Persephone; for the Manawaka women, it can be loss of innocence, death, and love. The sense of isolation the Manawaka women experience is aggravated by such factors as the hostility of life on the prairies, a legacy of middle-class Puritanism and the social and gender restraints it imposes.

The abduction of Persephone represents not only the loss of child, but the loss of identity; as a mother Demeter has lost the better part of herself: "For at one time she carried the child under her heart. And it does not go out of her heart ever again. Not even when it is dead" (the words of a noble Abyssinian woman quoted by C. Kerényi in "Kore" 101).

For Hagar, loss/exile begins twofold: first, the loss of her female identity, which she first tries to repress and then to retrieve, when it is too late. She is at odds with her society: as Jason Currie's daughter she has respect and

advantage, but there is no fulfillment in that role for her Demeter self, so she looks elsewhere, namely to marriage with Bram. This is imprisonment of the same kind as what she experienced as Jason Currie's daughter. First she was imprisoned by the stifling conservatism of her status, then by the lack of status as Bram's wife. This leads to her self-imposed exile from the place of her birth, her *fatherland*.

As an adult Rachel has been relegated to a subsidiary role as May Cameron's unmarried daughter; in this arrested Persephone state she has been exiled from her maternal and sexual self, and consequently exists in a limbo, estranged from her own identity.

Stacey is exiled from her own self-identity; she, in opposition to her sister Rachel, has lost sight of herself in her role as Demeter, but a Demeter who has been gagged. She needs to coalesce the scattered parts of her existence.

Morag experiences both loss and exile: loss through the untimely death of her natural parents, and exile as the foster-daughter of the town garbageman. Her exile from Manawaka is self-imposed, but, unlike Hagar seeking to flee, Morag is seeking.

The situation of exile/loss is intolerable for the Manawaka women. They share a sense of desperation exhibited variously through their discourse and their behavior. If they succumb to the demands of their situation, they will lose their identity.

Search for Autonomy

As Demeter wanders the earth with her burning torches, grief-stricken with Persephone's loss, she is not in search of autonomy; this she already possesses somewhat, in her status as Olympian goddess and the goddess of fertility, so much so that she is able to establish the foundations of her own worship at Eleusis. Rather, her wanderings and her staunch refusal to acquiesce to the machinations of Zeus and Hades re-affirm her ability to act autonomously and effectively.

For all their kinship to Demeter, the Manawaka women are not goddesses but fallible mortal women. For them, the search for autonomy is based on their need to attain for themselves what has previously been denied them: the right to exist within and for themselves, in whichever way seems fitting. They must find for themselves what they have never had: independence, self-validity, self-identity. This is the nature of their quest, the acquisitions of their own selves.

Hagar's search has been one of arrested movement. While she physically departs from Manawaka, searching for a better life in the West, she avoids the inner journey to connect with her own Demeter self, and thus returns to Manawaka the same as when she left.

Rachel, for all her vacillation between inward desires and outward appearances, successfully sets out on a pyschic journey to coalesce the divergent parts of herself into a

whole. For her, the inner journey is not only necessary but inevitable. She achieves, after a fashion, a radicalized autonomy, completely antipathetic to the social expectations she was indoctrinated with. This culminates in the physical journey.

Stacey wanders far only in her imagination to find her missing autonomy. In some respects her search for autonomy is the most difficult, due to the unappeasable demands of children, husband and domestic life. Nor is it her desire to be totally autonomous, for that would imply estrangement from the very things that define her, maternity and domesticity. Her search takes her back in time to Manawaka, but, ultimately, she does not go much farther than her front door to find what she seeks.

Morag's whole life is a search for autonomy. As a writer she is especially sensitive to the necessity of discovering the nature of one's own voice, and both physically and spiritually she journeys in search of it. Her search embodies all of the factors that compel Hagar, Stacey and Rachel in their searches: a retreat from social and emotional isolation; pursuit of love, both physical and emotional; the need for acknowledgement and self-identity; and finally, spiritual totality.

Reconciliation

> ...Demeter...half yearns for her daughter to return as before....As soon as she knows the seed has been eaten, there is no more said on the subject--all is joy. Persephone has eaten

> the food of Hades, has taken the seed of the dark into herself and can now give birth to her own new personality. So also can her mother....(Luke 65)

The reunion of Demeter and Persephone is not only the joyful one of mother and daughter, but that of the divided psyche made whole again and made new. Together Demeter and Persephone join one another and then join Hecate to become the Triple Goddess, representing all the aspects of existence: youth and innocence, maturity and fecundity, and finally old age and wisdom. They represent the intricate interconnectedness of the cycle of human existence--life that is dependent on death that in turn is dependent on life.

The Manawaka women come to be on intimate terms with this cycle. They learn, in their individual ways and with varying success, to weave together the divergent threads of their lives into a whole, by learning the language of compromise. This language is essential; without it, they are in danger of vanishing altogether.

Hagar is the most telling example of the need to compromise, because she nearly fails to do so. As it is, she is able to exorcise the demons of her past by first articulating those demons. Having done so, and faced with her own death, she learns finally to forgive herself for not discarding earlier her identity as Jason Currie's daughter, and so depriving herself of the language of joy.

Rachel learns the language of compromise much earlier than Hagar, and, in so, doing has opened her life to possibilities. She realizes that those possibilities can be

negative as well as positive, but having reconsidered the social milieu from which she came, Rachel has learned that the healthy inner life is what sustains, not the synthetic structure of social respectability.

Stacey learns to accept herself, stretch marks included, and to like herself a little more. In recognizing that her failures will come as surely as her triumphs, she begins to transform herself into the wise woman she longs to be. She realizes that her life, such as it is, is certainly endurable; there is even, amongst the chaos and confusion, the strong possibility for joy.

Morag, a survivor from a young age, learned early the language of compromise. She recognized early the significance of interpretation, and learned that, while the outside world insists on imposing conditions on her life, she has the ability to re-vision those conditions. Thus, unappeasable social expectations lose their ability to intimidate her, and her marginalized position becomes a banner of her autonomy.

It is clear that there are powerful resonances of the Demeter myth throughout the Manawaka novels. It is their shared perceptions of what defines the female experience, and how women can enhance or alter that experience. That experience is defined but not bounded by femininity; the experiences of love, loss, self-identity and reunion translate into any language, in any time. The feminine

experience related through Demeter/Persephone, Hagar, Rachel, Stacey and Morag are in fact paradigms of universal experience, and, as such, it is perhaps not too naïve to hope that their stories can illuminate and instruct.

As the myth of Demeter is portrayed in the Manawaka stories, filtered through a uniquely Laurentian perspective, it is to be expected that the resulting version of the myth will reflect something of this special vision. In The Diviners, Laurence explores the relationship between the invaders of the new world--the English/Scots settlers, as represented by Christie and Brooke--and the native inhabitants, represented by Jules Tonnerre and his family. Morag's daughter Pique comes to represent a reconciliation of sorts, between these two divergent cultures. She sets out, as an incarnation of Persephone, on a quest to explore her two heritages. The language of reconciliation that typifies this quest is echoed in the Demeter myth, when Persephone is returned to her mother transformed, now destined to divide her time between the living world and the Underworld.

I would suggest that the myth of Demeter, as it is incarnated in Laurence's work, reflects a Canadian perspective and will increasingly take on characteristics unique to prairie literature. Evidence of this is in the way Hermes, as a *pyschopomp*, is characterized through Laurence's male characters. It is particularly interesting that, chronologically--beginning with Murray Lees in The

Stone Angel, to Hector Jonas in A Jest of God, to Luke Venturi with his Indian sweater in The Fire-Dwellers and culminating in Jules Tonnerre in The Diviners--Laurence has moved towards portraying him as a member of the Native culture. Thus, he is transformed from Hermes, the slayer of Argus, sent to appeal "to Hades with gentle words and bring chaste Persephone up from the murky depths to the light (Appendix 111), to Jules Tonnerre, singer/songwriter, drifter, living in one room with yellowed linoleum and a bare lightbulb, member of a marginalized people, living on the fringes of society. There is a strong sense of a melding between classical and native mythology, an inevitable consequence of portraying one through another. Certainly, this melding suggests possibilities, not only for the development of a prairie female discourse, but to give voice to a universal language, one that is both forged of words and beyond words.

> Morag had once tried divining with the willow wand. Nothing at all had happened. Royland had said she didn't have the gift. She wasn't surprised. Her area was elsewhere. He was divining for water. What in hell was she divining for? (The Diviners 102)

Discourse is what she divines for--communication, the means to connect and to meld with another human being. Morag, like Hélène Cixous, makes us aware of the evasiveness and nebulousness of discourse, but also of its absolute necessity. Hagar, Rachel, Stacey and Morag learn to speak, communicate, give voice, to sing, to rejoice in the experience of Demeter.

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Appendix

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter

I begin to sing about the holy goddess, Demeter of the beautiful hair, about her and her daughter, Persephone of the lovely ankles, whom Hades snatched away; loud-thundering Zeus, who sees all, gave her to him.

Alone, away from Demeter of the golden scepter and goodly crops, Persephone was playing with the deep-bosomed daughters of Oceanus and picking flowers along a soft meadow: beautiful roses, crocuses, violets, irises, and hyacinths; and Earth at the will of Zeus to please Hades, the host of many, produced as a snare for the fair maiden a wonderful and radiant narcissus, an awesome sight to all, both immortal gods and mortal men. From its stem a hundred blossoms sprouted forth and their odor was most sweet. All wide heaven above, the whole earth below, and the swell of the salt sea laughed. The girl was astounded and reached out with both her hands together to pluck the beautiful delight. And the wide-pathed earth yawned in the Nysaean plain, and the lord and host of many, who goes by many names, the son of Cronus, rushed at her with his immortal horses. And he snatched her up in his golden chariot and carried her away in tears. She shouted with shrill cries and called on father Zeus, the son of Cronus, the highest and the best, but no one of the immortals or of mortals--not even the olive trees laden with their fruit--heard her voice except for the daughter of Persaeus, Hecate, her hair brightly adorned, who listened from her cave as she thought kindly thoughts, and lord Helius, the splendid son of Hyperion. These two heard the maid call on the son of Cronus, father Zeus, but he sat apart, away from the gods, in his temple with its many suppliants, receiving beautiful holy offerings from mortal men. By the counsel of Zeus, his brother and her uncle Hades, the son of Cronus, who bears many names, the lord and host of many, led her off with his immortal horses against her will.

As long as the goddess could behold the earth, starry heaven, the deep flowing sea full of fish, the rays of the sun, and still hoped to see her dear mother and the race of everlasting gods, hope soothed her great heart, although she was distressed. But the peaks of the mountains and the depths of the sea echoed with her immortal voice, and her lady mother heard her.

Sharp pain seized Demeter's heart and she tore the headdress about her ambrosial hair with her own dear hands and threw off the dark covering from both her shoulders, and she rushed in pursuit just like a bird over land and water. But no one--either of gods or mortal men--wished to tell what had really happened--not even a bird came to her as a messenger of truth. For nine days, then, lady Demeter roamed over the earth holding burning torches in her hands and in her grief did not eat any ambrosia or drink sweet nectar, nor did she bathe her body. But when dawn brought on the light of the tenth day, Hecate, a torch in hand, met her and gave her some news as she exclaimed: "Lady Demeter, bringer of goodly gifts in season, who of the heavenly gods or mortal men carried off Persephone and troubled your dear heart? For I heard her voice but did not see with my eyes who it was. I am telling you the whole truth quickly."

Thus Hecate spoke, and the daughter of Rhea of the beautiful hair did not answer but swiftly rushed away with her, holding burning torches in her hands. They came to Helius, the lookout for both gods and men, and stood before his horses, and the goddess of goddesses spoke: "Helius, do at least have respect for me, a goddess, if I have ever by word or by deed gladdened your heart and your spirits. Through the barren air I heard the piercing cry of the girl whom I bore, a sweet daughter, illustrious in her beauty, as though she were being violated; yet I saw nothing with my eyes. But since you look down from the divine aether with your rays on all the earth and sea, tell me truthfully if you have seen my dear child at all and who either of gods or mortal men has seized

her alone, away from me, by force against her will and made away."

Thus she spoke. And the son of Hyperion answered her: "Demeter, regal daughter of Rhea of the beautiful hair, you will know the truth. For indeed I revere you greatly and I pity you in your grief for your daughter of the lovely ankles. No other of the immortals is to blame except the cloud-gatherer Zeus, who gave her to his own brother, Hades, to be called his lovely wife. And he seized her and with his horses carried her away to the gloomy depths below as she cried aloud. But, O goddess, desist from your great lament; you should not thus bear an unrelenting anger to no avail. Indeed Hades, the ruler over many, is not an unseemly husband for your daughter; he is your own brother and born from the same blood, and as for honor, when at the first power was divided three ways, his lot was to be made the lord of all those with whom he dwelt."

Thus he spoke and called out to his horses. And at his cry they nimbly bore the swift chariot, just like long-winged birds. But a more dread and terrible grief possessed Demeter's heart, and thereafter she was angry with the son of Cronus, Zeus, enwrapped in clouds; she kept away from the gatherings of the gods and high Olympus, and for a long time she went among the cities and rich fields of men, disguising her beautiful form. No one of men or deep-bosomed women who saw her recognized her until she came to the home of wise Celeus, who at that time was ruler of fragrant Eleusis. Grieving in her dear heart she sat near the road by the Maiden Well, from which the people drew their water; she was in the shade, for an olive tree grew overhead. Her appearance resembled that of a very old woman who was long past her days for childbearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite; she was like the nurses for the children of law-pronouncing kings or the housekeepers in their echoing halls. The daughters of Celeus, of the family of Eleusis, saw her there as they came after the easily drawn water so that they might

bring it in their bronze pitchers to the dear home of their father. There were four of them, just like goddesses in their youthful bloom, Callidice and Cleisidice and lovely Demo and Callithoe, who was the oldest of them all. They did not know Demeter, for it is difficult for mortals to recognize the gods, and standing near they spoke winged words: "Who are you, old woman, of those born long ago? Where are you from? Why have you come away from the city and not approached the houses there, in whose shadowy halls dwell women just like you and younger, who would welcome you in word as well as in deed?"

Thus they spoke. And she, the queenly goddess, answered with these words: "Dear children, whoever you are of women, I bid you greeting, and I shall tell you my tale. To be sure it is not inappropriate to relate the truth to you who have asked. My name is Doso, for my lady mother gave it to me. Now then I have come from Crete over the broad back of the sea--not willingly but against my wishes, for by force pirates carried me away. Then they put in at Thoricus, where the women and the men together disembarked; they were busy with their meal beside the cables of the ship, but my heart had no desire for the delicious food. I hastened away over the black land and escaped from my overbearing masters so that they might not sell me, whom they had not bought, and reap a profit from me. And so I have come here after my wanderings, and I have no idea at all what land this is or who inhabit it. But may all those who dwell in homes of Olympus grant that you have husbands and bear chidren just as parents desire. But you maidens pity me now and show concern until, dear children, I come to the home of a man and woman to perform for them zealously the tasks appropriate for an elderly woman like me; I could hold a newborn child in my arms and care for him well, make my master's bed in the recess of his well-built chambers, and teach the women their tasks."

Thus spoke the goddess and at once the virgin maiden, Callidice, the most beautiful of the daughters of Celeus,

answered: "Good woman, we mortals even though we suffer must bear what the gods bestow, for indeed they are much the stronger. I shall help you with the following advice and I shall tell you the names of the men who have great honor and power here and who are foremost among the people and guard the battlements of our city by their counsels and firm judgements. There is clever Triptolemus and Dioclus and Polyxeinus and noble Eumolpus and Dolichus and our own brave father. All of these have wives who take care of their homes, and no one of them at the very first sight of your person would dishonor you or turn you out of their house but they will welcome you, for to be sure you are like one of the gods. But if you wish, stay here, so that we may go to our father's house and tell our mother, the deep-bosomed Metaneira, the whole story in the hope that she will bid you come to our place and not search for the homes of the others. She cherishes in our well-built house an only son, born late, a darling long prayed for. If you were to bring him up and he attained the measure of his youth, you would easily be the envy of any woman who saw you. Such are the great rewards that would be yours for your care."

Thus she spoke and Demeter nodded her head in agreement. And the girls filled their shining pitchers with water and carried them away happy. Quickly they came to the great house of their father and told their mother at once what they had seen and heard. She enjoined them to go with all speed and to hire the woman at any price. Just as deer or heifers bound along the meadow when in the springtime they have had their fill of pasture, thus they hurried along the hollow wagon path, holding up the folds of their lovely garments, and their hair, which was like the flower of the crocus, danced about their shoulders. And they found the illustrious goddess where they had left her earlier and thereupon led her to the dear house of their father; she followed behind with her head veiled, distressed at heart, and the dark robe grazed the slender feet of the goddess.

Soon they arrived at the house of Celeus, a man cherished by Zeus, and passed through the vestibule to where their lady mother sat by the pillar that supported the sturdy roof, holding her son, just a baby, in her lap. Her daughters ran to her, but the goddess stood at the threshold; her head reached up to the beams and she filled the doorway with a divine radiance. Then awe and reverence and fear seized Metaneira and she sprang up from her couch and bade her guest be seated, but Demeter, the giver of goodly gifts in season, did not wish to sit on the splendid couch but waited in silence with her beautiful eyes downcast, until Iambe in her wisdom set out for her a chair, artfully made, and threw a silvery fleece over it; then Demeter sat down holding her veil over her face with her hands. For a long time she remained seated without a sound, grieving; she did not by word or action acknowledge anyone but without a smile, not touching food or drink, she sat wasted with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter, until Iambe in her wisdom resorted to many jests and jokes and brought the holy lady around to smile and laugh and bear a happy heart (thereafter too Iambe was to cheer her in her anguish). And Metaneira filled a cup with wine as sweet as honey and offered it, but she refused saying that it was not right for her to drink red wine. But she ordered them to mix meal and water with tender mint and give it to her to drink. Metaneira mixed the potion and gave it to the goddess as she had ordered. And the great lady Demeter took it for the sake of the holy rite.

Beautifully robed Metaneira was the first to speak among them: "Greetings, O lady, I expect that you are not born of base parents but of noble ones. Majesty and grace shine clearly in your eyes as though from the eyes of royalty who mete out justice. But we mortals, even though we suffer, must bear what the gods bestow, for the yoke lies on our necks. Yet now since you have come here, as much as I have will be yours. Nurse this child whom the immortals gave to me late in life, fulfilling my desperate hopes and endless prayers. If you

were to bring him up and he attained the measure of his youth, you would easily be the envy of any woman who saw you. Such are the great rewards that would be yours for your care."

Then Demeter of the beautiful crown replied to her: "Sincere greetings to you, also, O lady, and may the gods afford you only good. I shall take the boy gladly, as you bid, and tend to him, and I have good hopes that he will not be harmed or destroyed by any evil charms, for I know much more potent remedies and effective antidotes for harmful spells."

Thus she spoke and with her immortal hands she took the child to her fragrant bosom. And his mother rejoiced in her heart. Thus she nursed in the house the splendid son of wise Celeus, Demophoon, whom beautifully robed Metaneira bore. And he grew like a god, not nourished on mortal food but anointed by Demeter with ambrosia, just as though sprung from the gods, and she breathed sweetness upon him as she held him to her bosom. At night she would hide him in the might of the fire, like a brand, without the knowledge of his dear parents. It was source of great wonder to them that he grew and flourished before his time, for he was like the gods to look upon. And she would have made him never grow old and immortal, if beautifully robed Metaneira in her foolishness had not seen what was happening, as she watched in the night from her fragrant chamber. Great was her dismay and she gave a shriek and struck both her thighs, terrified for her child. Amid her groans she uttered winged words: "Demophoon, my child, this stranger buries you within the blazing fire to my anguish and grievous pain."

Thus she spoke in agony, and the goddess of goddesses, Demeter of the beautiful crown, grew angry as she listened; with her immortal hands she snatched from the fire the dear son whom Metaneira had borne in her house, blessing beyond hope, and threw him down on the floor. Demeter was dreadfully angry in her heart as she spoke with beautifully robed Metaneira: "Mortals are ignorant and stupid who cannot

foresee the fate both good and bad that is in store. Thus you in your foolishness have done a thing that cannot be remedied. I call to witness by the relentless waters of the river Styx, the oath of the gods, that I would have made your dear child immortal and never grow old all his days and I would have granted him imperishable honor, but now as it is he will not be able to escape death and the Fates. Yet imperishable honor will always be his because he has lain on my knees and slept in my arms. But when the years go by and he has reached his prime, the new generation of Eleusinians will continually engage in dread wars and battles all their days. I am Demeter, esteemed and honored as the greatest benefit and joy to mortals and immortals. Now then, let all the people build to me a great temple and an altar with it, below the town and its steep wall, on the rising hill above the well, Kallichoron. And I myself shall teach my rites, so that performing them with reverence you may propitiate my heart."

Thus the goddess spoke and cast aside her old age, transforming her size and appearance. Beauty breathed around and about her and a delicious odor was wafted from her fragrant garments. The radiance from the immortal person of the goddess shone far and wide and her golden hair flowed down on her shoulders. The sturdy house was filled with her brilliance as though with a lightning flash. She disappeared from the room and at once Metaneira's knees gave way; for a long time she was speechless and did not even remember at all to pick up her late-born son from the floor. But his sisters heard his pitiful cries and sprang down from their beds, spread well with covers; one of them then picked up the child in her arms and took him to her bosom; another stirred the fire and a third hastened on her delicate feet to rouse their mother from her fragrant chamber. They gathered around the frantic child and bathed him with loving care. But his spirits were not soothed, for the nurses who tended him now were indeed inferior. The whole night long, trembling with fear, they made their supplication to the illustrious

goddess, and as soon as dawn appeared they told the truth to Celeus whose power was great, just as Demeter the goddess of the beautiful crown had commanded. Then Celeus called the many people to an assembly and bade them build a splendid temple to Demeter of the lovely hair and an altar on the rising hill. They listened to him as he spoke and immediately complied and did as they were told. And the child flourished by divine destiny.

When they had finished and ceased from their labor, each made his way homeward. But golden Demeter remained sitting there quite apart from all the blessed gods, wasted with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter. And she caused men a most terrible and devastating year on the fruitful land. The earth would not send up a single sprout, for Demeter of the lovely crown kept the seed covered. In vain the oxen dragged the many curved ploughs through the fields and much white barley was sown in the earth to no avail. Now she would have destroyed the entire human race by cruel famine and deprived those who have their homes on Olympus of their glorious prestige from their gifts and sacrifices, if Zeus had not noticed and taken thought in his heart. First he roused golden-winged Iris to summon Demeter of the lovely hair, desirable in her beauty. Thus he ordered. And Iris obeyed Zeus, the dark-clouded son of Cronus, and on swift feet traversed the interval between. She came to the citadel of fragrant Eleusis and found dark-robed Demeter in her temple. She spoke to her, uttering winged words: "Demeter, father Zeus, whose knowledge is imperishable, commands you to join the company of the eternal gods. Come now, let not the word I bring from Zeus be unaccomplished."

Thus she spoke in supplication, but Demeter's heart was unswayed. Thereupon father Zeus sent down to her all the blessed gods who exist forever, and they came one by one calling out her name and offering her many very beautiful gifts and whatever honors she would like to choose for herself among the immortals. But no one was able to sway her mind and

her heart from her anger and she stubbornly rejected all appeals. She maintained that she would never set foot on fragrant Olympus nor allow fruit to sprout from the earth until she saw with her own eyes her lovely daughter.

Then loud-thundering Zeus, who sees all, sent the slayer of Argus, Hermes, with his golden wand to Erebus to appeal to Hades with gentle words and bring chaste Persephone up from the murky depths to the light, so that her mother might desist from anger when she saw her daughter with her own eyes. Hermes did not disobey, and straightway he left the realms of Olympus and swiftly rushed down to the depths of the earth. He encountered the lord Hades within his house, sitting on a couch with his modest wife, who was very reluctant because of her longing for her mother. And Demeter far away brooded over her designs to thwart the actions of the blessed gods. The mighty slayer of Argus stood near and said: "Hades of the dark hair, ruler of the dead, father Zeus has ordered me to bring to him from Erebus august Persephone, so that her mother may see her with her own eyes and desist from her wrath and dread anger against the immortals. For she is devising a great scheme to destroy the feeble tribes of earth-born men by keeping the seed hidden uner earth and ruining the honors that are bestowed on the immortals. She clings to her dire wrath and does not associate with the gods but remains on the rocky citadel of Eleusis, sitting apart within her fragrant temple."

Thus he spoke. And wise Persephone was delighted and jumped up quickly in her joy. But her husband secretly gave her the honey-sweet fruit of the pomegranate to eat, taking thought for himself that she should not remain all her days above with august, dark-robed Demeter. Hades, host of many, then yoked his immortal horses to the front of his golden chariot, which Persephone mounted; the mighty slayer of Argus, Hermes, took the reins and whip in his hands and drove them up and away from the palace; the pair of horses readily sped along and easily covered their long journey. Neither the

sea nor streams of rivers nor grassy glens nor mountaintops impeded the onrush of the immortal horses as they cut through the deep air above them in their course. The charioteer brought them to a halt in front of the fragrant temple where Demeter of the lovely crown waited. At the sight of her daughter she rushed out like a Maenad down a mountain thick with woods. When Persephone on the other side saw the beautiful eyes of her mother, she leaped down from the chariot with its horses and ran, throwing her arms about her neck in an embrace. But while Demeter still had her dear child in her arms, suddenly her heart sensed some treachery; trembling with dread she let go her loving embrace and asked quickly: "My child, have you eaten any food while you were below? Speak up, do not hide anything so that we both may know. If you have not, even though you have been in the company of loathsome Hades, you will live with me and your father, Zeus the cloud-gatherer, son of Cronus, in honor among all the immortals. But if you have eaten anything, you will return again beneath the depths of the earth and live there a third part of each year; the other two-thirds of the time you will spend with me and the other immortals. When the spring blooms with all sorts of sweet-smelling flowers, then again you will rise from the gloomy region below, a great wonder for gods and mortal men. But tell me, too, by what trick the strong host of many deceived you?"

The very beautiful Persephone then said in answer: "To be sure, mother, I shall tell you the whole truth. When Hermes, the bringer of luck and swift messenger, came from my father, the son of Cronus, and the other gods of the sky, saying that I was to come up from Erebus in order that you might see me with your own eyes and desist from your wrath and dread anger against the immortals, I immediately jumped up in my joy. But Hades swiftly put in my mouth the fruit of the pomegranate, a honey-sweet morsel, and compelled me to eat it by force against my will. I shall tell you too how he came and carried me down to the depths of the earth through the shrewd

plan of my father, the son of Cronus, going through it all as you ask. We were all playing in a lovely meadow...and gathering lovely flowers in our hands, a mixed array of soft crocuses, irises, hyacinths, roses in full bloom, and lilies, wonderful to behold, and a narcissus, which the wide earth produced, in color yellow of a crocus. I plucked it joyously, but the earth beneath opened wide and thereupon the mighty lord, the host of many, leaped up and carried me away in his golden chariot beneath the earth despite my violent protests--my cries were loud and shrill. I tell you the whole truth, although the story gives me pain."

Thus they then in mutual love and tender embraces greatly cheered each other's heart and soul the whole long day. Their grief was assauged as they exchanged their joys. Hecate, her hair brilliantly arrayed, approached them and frequently embraced the holy daughter of Demeter. From that time on, regal Hecate became the lady and attendant of Persephone.

Loud-thundering Zeus, who sees far and wide, sent as a messenger to them Rhea of the lovely hair to lead dark-robed Demeter among the company of the gods, and he promised to grant her the honors that she would choose among the immortal gods,and he consented that her daughter live a third part of the revolving year in the gloomy depths below and the other two-thirds by the side of her mother and the other immortals. Thus he ordered, and the goddess Rhea did not disobey the message of Zeus. She quickly rushed down from the heights of Olympus and came to the Rharian plain, previously very fertile, but now not fertile at all, standing leafless and barren. The white seed was hidden through the machinations of Demeter of the lovely ankles. But thereafter soon, with the burgeoning of spring, long ears of grain would be luxuriant and the rich furrows too along the ground would be laden with grain, some already bound in sheaves. Rhea came from the barren air to this place first of all and the goddesses beheld each other gladly and rejoiced in their hearts. Rhea, her

hair brilliantly arrayed, spoke to Demeter thus: "Come here, my daughter; loud-thundering Zeus, who sees far and wide, summons you to join the company of the gods, and he has promised to grant you whatever honors you would like among the immortals, and he has consented that your daughter live a third part of the revolving year in he gloomy depths below and the other two-thirds with you and the other gods. Thus he said it would be accomplished and nodded his head in assent. But come, my child, and be obedient; do not persist in your relentless anger against Zeus, the dark-clouded son of Cronus. But quickly make grow for men the life-bringing fruit in abundance."

Thus she spoke, and Demeter of the lovely crown obeyed. Quickly she caused fruit to spring up from the fertile plains, and the whole wide land was laden with leaves and flowers. She went to the kings who minister justice (Triptolemus, Diocles, the rider of horses, the mighty Eumolpus, and Celeus, the leader of the people) and showed them the performance of her holy rites and taught her mysteries to them all, Triptolemus and Polyxeinus and Diocles besides--holy mysteries that one may not by any means violate or question or express. For the great reverence due to the gods restrains one's voice. Happy is the one of men on earth who has seen these things. But the one who is uninitiated into the holy rites and has no part never is destined to a similar joy when he is dead in the gloomy realm below.

But when the goddess of goddesses had ordained all these things, they made their way to Olympus among the company of the other gods. There they dwell beside Zeus, who delights in the thunder, august and holy goddesses. Greatly happy is the one of men on earth whom they dearly love; straightway they send, as a guest to his great house, Plutus, who gives wealth to mortal men.

Come now you who hold power over the land of fragrant Eleusis, sea-girt Paros, and rocky Antron, lady and queen Demeter, the giver of good things in season, both yourself and

your daughter, very beautiful Persephone, kindly grant me a pleasing substance in reward for my song. And I shall remember both you and another song as well. (Classical Mythology 228-41)